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[For general background information on the history of slavery and missionization in Georgia and South Carolina, see Categories 175 and 17, pp. 67-109, and 113-251 passim.]

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174 main, but other elements of religion and ritual were not. Sacred medicine in the form of conjuration and healing is one example. According to Thompson "Nowhere is Kongo-Angola influence on the New World more pronounced, more profound than in black traditional cemeteries in the South. The nature of the objects that decorate the graves there . . . reveals a strong continuity . . . a restatement of the Kongo notion of the tomb as a charm for the persistence of the spirit. . . ." Thompson notes the strong sense of communion with ancestors among Kongo peoples and manifestations of this retentive element in the New World. Additionally, the BaKongo concepts of "bad magic" play a significant role in New World attitudes toward the supernatural.[14] All of these elements were part of Kongo sacred traditions. Thus, a complex pattern of convergence of at least two African cultural regions developed in coastal Carolina, creating a socioreligious community among the Gullahs.

175 567 Sea Island Gullahs received little attention in antebellum days. On the contrary, while as laborers they produced some of the world's finest cotton, Sea Island slavery was a very impersonal type of bondage. Most slaveholders did not directly oversee their plantations, nor live on the "unhealthy" Islands for more than a season. But the advent of civil conflict brought some immediate changes. Early in the war the Sea Island region was occupied by Northern forces, and widespread interest centered on these slaves whom the "aristocracy" left behind in their hasty flight. It was in the Sea Islands that the so-called "Port Royal experiment," supposedly a test of black initiative and valor, was tried.[15]

• [197] Northern reaction to the Gullahs was mixed. Not all of the "missionaries" who embarked on the Sea Island enterprise were convinced that efforts at "uplifting" Gullahs would succeed. "It is the opinion of all who know the South," wrote Arthur Sumner of Cambridge, Mass., from St. Helena Island, "that the negroes of these Sea Islands are the most degraded slaves South of Dixie's Line . . . a meaner, more ungrateful and unhandsome lot than those of our district I pray that I shall never see."[16]

Undoubtedly Northerners such as Sumner were completely unprepared to find such "foreign" and "pure" blacks, who had an initial suspicion about the motives of white people no matter what their political affiliation. Yet other Northerners felt differently about the Gullahs and [197] grew to truly appreciate them. Their distinct form of speech was more than a separate dialect which linguists and folklorists later attempted to

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capture. To some whites, this language was a gifted, colorful, and picturesque form of expression, so original and peculiar to the Gullahs that it was beyond emulation. In 1863, David Thorpe, then a teacher on occupied St. Helena Island, wrote to his father-in-law, "Old John" Mooney, describing among other things, the force with which Gullahs used their limited vocabulary:

> If you ask a man how he came from any place, he will say, "I took my foot." If you ask him about any work he has on hand, when he is to do it, he says, "I will strike in on that tomorrow and fight on with him till I get him done, den drop back on the next thing them is."[7]

Gullah musical ability was noted even in antebellum years. None who visited and wrote about the Sea Islands before or during the Civil War failed to comment on the rhapsodic tunes which the Gullah boatmen sang as their oars maintained a graceful, timely rhythm when striking the waters. And perhaps no one, except Gullahs themselves, was more stirred by the melancholy beauty of their "prayer-songs" than the Methodist missionaries who, after 1830, went among them to proselytize. But even a Northern skeptic like Arthur Sumner was moved by the musical power the Gullahs displayed, as indicated by his sublime description of July 4, 1862, on St. Helena:

> We had a glorious celebration of the Fourth. All the negroes on this island were assembled, and marched in a melodious procession, bearing green branches, and singing "Roll, Jordan, Roll" down through the beautiful shady road by the old Episcopal Church. Around this picturesque building, in front of the platform they gathered in a great crowd under the moss-grown oaks, while our majestic gridiron waved above them. General Saxton and one or two others made brief remarks. The height of the festivities was music and dried herring.
>
> Oh, I wish you and all my friends could have heard these Africs sing! I never listened to more impressive music than this. The singing was intrinsicially good; the songs strange and beautiful and their swaying to and fro with the melody, seemed to have a sort of oceanic grandeur in it."[8]

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought a flurry of interest and writing related to the Gullahs which continued through the 1930s. Folklorists, linguists, anthropologists, musicologists, sociologists, and novelists began celebrating the Sea Island region as a quaint, mysterious, picturesque corner of America. Some of this literature remains useful. Most of the scholarship of the period badly needs placing in a more modern, sensitive perspective, because it is dated and full of the

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175 If the results of Christian instruction were measured by numbers of rebellions following Vesey and Turner, it could be said that insofar as status quo proponents were concerned, such instruction of bondspeople was eminently successful. Slaves appeared to accept Protestantism taught in a spirit purposely antithetical to their will to freedom. Emphasis was on authority, dependence on future rewards and punishments for suffering or wrongdoing on earth, and a profound inequality between master and slave. This seemed especially the case in the Sea Islands. There no widespread slave conspiracy or rebellion was known of, and Christianity appeared well entrenched by the time of freedom.

121 This study examines the Christian conversion process among the Gul-
175 lahs in an effort to understand these slaves' interpretation of Christianity and the motives behind attempts to Christianize them. It is hypothesized that Gullah slaves of coastal Carolina used Christianity as an ideology with strong connotations supporting their sense of freedom. Early efforts to resist bondage, represented fusing Christianity with Africanity to provide a militant nationalism articulated by the black rebels of Charleston. Failure of that Conspiracy shook the Gullah community and may have facilitated a new adaptive structure in which slaves selectively employed Christianity in ways important to their own social existence. Slaves continued to oppose bondage, not with physical force, but by creating a strong, religious collective which shielded them from a sense of alienation. But their experiences were also based on an African world view and cultural structure though conceptually expressed in Christian terms. In the new religion, the slaves found some features reminiscent of their African socioreligious past. It also offered an explanation for their historical situation, which inspired currents of hope. On the Sea Islands, Gul-
121 lahs partly used the moral teachings of Christ as a basis for community
175 structure and organization. Yet they saw no contradiction in refusing to
•799 blindly internalize everything they were taught. Thus Gullahs did not trespass against their own moral sense or jeopardize their integrity as a people struggling against oppression. Their retention of an African world
121 view enabled them to maintain an appreciation of life on a collective level, striving to preserve the group consciousness that was a main ingredient of African heritage. Hence Christian and African traditions helped shape the resistance culture and plantation commonwealth that evolved in the slave quarters. In this sense religious instruction of the slaves can-

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175 person." For some time there was no one in the province to preach or administer sacraments until one more to the liking of certain communicants was substituted. The new rector was reportedly of "evil fame" and on one occasion, "in his cups baptised a bear."[6]

Some Carolina clergymen had harsh words for the planters who made their lives and work difficult. The most dedicated minister, Francis Le Jau of Goose Creek, wrote that "revenge, self-interest, engrossing of trade, peaces of profit" in anything whatsoever were the only concern of planters. Le Jau was convinced that the "topping men" of the colony "were satisfied with a church which they could largely control and which made no pietistical demand on their way of life." And in a voice of unity the clergy wrote to the Society in London that the worse "generation of infidels" they had to deal with were not "those poor heathen slaves," but their masters. Speaking with "equal grief and truth" the clergy considered the planters' actions and attitudes to "have made themselves worse than dogs."[7]

175 The problem of Christian instruction was even more dire in the Sea
799 Island Parish of St. Helena. Until 1733 when Georgia was settled, this was South Carolina's southernmost frontier, embracing the township of Beaufort and surrounding islands. While more settled parishes were populated with whites and Africans, St. Helena was primarily still part of the Indian lands. The major occupation of the handful of settlers was Indian trade. Yemassee Indians inhabiting the region tried to maintain friendly relations with white settlers. But avaricious land grabbing and broken trade agreements caused conflicts that endangered the parish's existence. In 1715 the Yemassee waged all-out war, and the entire province faced extinction. Many settlers took refuge in Charleston. St. Helena was completely uprooted while an army of 600 whites and 400 slaves was obliged to engage the Indians throughout the southern regions of Carolina. Not until 1716 did white families return to St. Helena and rebuild their dwellings. But frequent alarms occasioned by Spaniards as well as Indians forced homeseekers to flee at a moment's notice to more densely occupied and better protected parishes.[8]

Although missionaries were sent among Indians around St. Helena as early as 1704, twenty more years passed before a church building for whites was erected. Prior to 1725 the nearest parish church was forty miles away from St. Helena by water travel. Six pews accommodated the Anglican communicants which consisted of around thirty-nine fami-

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lies in 1728. The first rector was Lewis Jones who served in that capacity until 1745. Jones painted a bleak picture of life on the frontier. "The inhabitants are mostly poor planters of corn, pease, rice and a good many of them living at a great distance from each other," he wrote in 1728. There were at that time sixty-two families in the parish, thirty-nine of whom were Anglican, twenty-one Presbyterian, one Independent, and one Anabaptist. At that time only 170 slaves lived in the entire parish, and hence they were a minority, an atypical situation for early Carolina.[9]

The parish had no school although a few families had private teachers. As for the Negro slaves, Jones admitted in 1728 that "no care" was taken in Christianizing them. The reason, he cited, was due to their frequent removal to other areas, since Spaniards and Indians plagued the frontier, carrying away slaves. As a result, the number of St. Helena slaves decreased rather than increased from 224 in 1727 to 170 in 1728, while the entire colony's black population was over 20,000 in 1727.[10] Several possibilities may explain the disappearance of slaves. Spaniards provided a safety valve and chance for freedom. Indians may have done the same or may have simply attempted to decimate the white people's black labor force. Proximity to freedom and the paucity of whites must have intensified slaves' expectation of obtaining liberty. If later developments are any indication, slaves took advantage of these opportunities and the removal of slaves from the area represented white efforts to prevent this. The pattern continued until the Spanish and Indians were pushed back by the settlement of Georgia.

But the Sea Island region received early missionary attention for the slaves from another Anglican source. Thomas Bray (1658–1729/30) was the chief organizer of the three Anglican missionary efforts—the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), established in 1699, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), formed in 1701, and the Associates for Dr. Bray, established in 1723/24 and reorganized in 1729–30. Bray's first concern was Christianizing blacks and Indians. But he also shared, with Georgia founder James Oglethorpe, an interest in improving the lot of prisoners in England. With encouragement and financial support from high places, Bray and a group of sympathizers attempted to put a missionary plan into operation, hence the founding of Bray's Associates. Because Thomas Bray and a number of Associates became involved in plans to found Georgia, it was determined that the southern missionary movement should begin near Savan-

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nah (since the Trustees did not initially intend to have slaves in Georgia). One Associate and Georgia Trustee wrote to John Wesley prior to the latter's departure for Georgia as a missionary to whites:

> One end for which we were associated was the conversion of Negro slaves. As yet nothing has been attempted in this way; but a door is opened, not far from home [i.e. Georgia]. The Purryburgers have purchased slaves; they act under our influence; and Mr. Oglethorpe will think it advisable to begin there.[11]

Thomas Bray did not live to see Oglethorpe settle Gebrgia or to witness the missionary attempt among South Carolina slaves. But he and his Associates were instrumental in bringing about one endeavor to Christianize slaves in South Carolina.[12]

A colony of Swiss Protestant refugees, led by Jean Pierre Purry, settled on the southern frontier on the north bank of the Savannah River in 1731. This was about 20 miles from where Savannah, Georgia, would be located in 1733. Two Moravian missionaries, commissioned by the Associates to instruct slaves in Purrysburg, arrived there in 1739. The missionary venture failed. Few blacks were in the area, and one missionary became ill and died within six months. The other sailed for Philadelphia the following year. But an even more significant note on the ill-fated nature of the plan was the fact that these missionaries apparently could not even speak English. Yet this early activity and interest in slave conversion in the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Island region set the stage for future developments. The Georgia Trustees' alteration of their brief policy of slavery exclusion in the colony, the proximity of the two colonies, and the Trustees' early concern for religious instruction made the Sea Island region fruitful territory for the evangelism of George Whitefield during the Great Awakening. These early associations also perhaps laid the foundation for later acceptance of black independent churches at a time when such institutions were forbidden elsewhere. Georgia's evangelistic fervor and liberalism spilled over into the South Carolina slave population in the Sea Island region.[13]

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Lewis Jones remained at St. Helena until his death in 1745 and his main concern as rector was with white communicants. In 1736 he complained to the Society that despite his endeavors he had only been allowed to baptize one black and one mulatto slave. Bringing Christianity to slaves in St. Helena was discouraging work. Writing to the Secretary in England he stated that "the pious zeal of the venerable Society, and

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of its worthy Diocesan for promoting Christian knowledge among the Negroes meets with but a cold reception." This attitude was further strengthened by the 1739 Stono Rebellion. From St. Helena Lewis Jones lamented the fact that twenty-three "much indulged" slaves from his parish had joined the rebellion.[14]

But St. Helena witnessed some spiritual awakening. Whitefield preached there in 1739 and convinced a few whites to instruct slaves in Christianity. Whitefield however was not popular with the Anglican hierarchy. Unbeknownst to Lewis Jones, Whitefield had been censored by Commissary Alexander Garden in Charleston, and the latter was outraged upon learning that the outspoken evangelist was preaching in the Anglican Church at St. Helena. Further problems were created for Jones by one of Whitefield's St. Helena disciples, a planter named Hugh Bryan. Bryan, considered a mystic and an eccentric, preached to his slaves and reportedly openly predicted they would rebel and obtain their freedom.[15]

Like sister parishes, St. Helena suffered from problems of white communicants with only marginal interest in spiritual matters. Jones complained that duly elected vestrymen refused to serve even after accepting appointments. Church attendance was also poor. Jones suggested Sunday worship be held only once in five weeks. But even these infrequent services were poorly attended with the total numbers of communicants usually not exceeding twenty. Still, the long tenure of Lewis Jones brought an added stability and consistency for the Church of England on the frontier and it remained the dominant denomination throughout the colonial era. After Jones' death, ministers came and went in rapid succession. As the parish grew in economic enterprise through cultivation of indigo, a demand for slaves gave St. Helena a new significance. Yet, except for short-term effects of the Great Awakening, Anglicans in the Sea Island region remained aloof toward spiritual enthusiasm for themselves and their burgeoning African-born black population.[16]

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Pecuniary interest and spiritual indifference were not the only factors that generated hostility and a "cold reception" from planters. The element of sheer physical self-preservation cannot be discounted as a reason for planter resistance. They were spread out on the frontier, surrounded by a predominantly hostile population—namely West Africans and Indians—and were in the process of exploiting both through bondage and unfair trade practices. Whites had every reason to fear of slave insurrec-

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freedom. It came in Charleston. As John Lofton points out, Santo Domingo provided a practical example of a successful black revolt, the age offered a philosophy, while natural inclinations and oppression supplied a rationale.[29] By 1822 ideology and leadership were present. The record shows that legions of slaves in the Lowcountry, hoping to spur a statewide insurrection under the contagion of freedom, prepared to take by force what was rightfully theirs. The rebellion strategy was formulated and formented under the guise of an African-Christian association in Charleston known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This strategy and the rebellion's leadership reflected the composition of slave society in coastal South Carolina and the spiritual orientation of the insurrectionists. Indeed, the attempted rebellion embodied militant aspects of two religious traditions. It was closely linked with the Methodist Church but was to be carried out under a mystique of African supernatural forces. Moreover, the relationship with African religious tradition may have been the strongest bond among the insurrectionists in their designs. In the Lowcountry, the real language of egalitarianism came from Christian ideology. This did not always translate into support for emancipation, although some whites, for a time, broached the issue. More significantly, the liberal trend led to black exposure to Christianity on a level not previously experienced. Although some slaves may have accepted Christianity just as it flowed out of the white man's mouth, many did not. This latter group used the Christian religion to help provide the genius of their liberation struggle.

Slave Religion in the Postwar Lowcountry

In the Lowcountry, early black exposure to Christianity was largely the work of those previously influenced by George Whitefield, and of postwar Methodists. Although a member of the Anglican clergy, Whitefield, as previously discussed, was not popular with the established church in South Carolina. His staunchest followers were within dissenting congregations. The English evangelist was particularly effective among Puritan-Baptists because of his Calvinist stand on scriptural authority, regenerate membership, and justification by faith. The first Lowcountry extension of the Old England Baptists was the establishment of a church at Euhaw in 1746, for the benefit of communicants who moved their habitations south to these Indian lands and to Edisto Island. Other churches were

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17 organized and preceded by missionaries who set up preaching places in
• 797 the Beaufort district and in the Savannah River area. The novelty of Baptist views on baptism and church membership were so different from other traditions that they attracted much attention and at first ensured ostracism in the Sea Island region. The Baptist mission at Beaufort was organized into a church in 1800. But upwardly mobile Baptists did not immediately gain respectability from the Episcopalian community. The
17 Reverend Henry Holcomb lived in Beaufort and served the Baptist Church
795 there for a number of years before and after the War for Independence.
797 In a letter he discussed early attitudes toward the Baptists:

> The principal inhabitants of Beaufort though possessed of learning, wealth and talents, were with a few honorable exceptions, strangers to true religion, and strongly prejudiced against the Baptists. The doctrine of regeneration they treated with contempt; and baptism, if we understand the meaning of the word, had never been administered in their vicinity. If ever I felt the ensnaring fear of men, it was then, but . . . God and truth were on my side. . . . Several "fellows of the better sort" made attempts to turn ministerial exercises into ridicule . . . stealing my Bible . . . while I was administering the Lord's Supper.[10]

Yet Sea Island Baptists overcame initial prejudice, and Episcopalians (postwar Anglicans) grew accustomed to witnessing baptizings in the Beaufort River. Contrary to Episcopalian apprehensions, baptismal rites were administered with the greatest solemnity, and even Baptist church services contained none of the evangelical enthusiasm that characterized Methodists at that time. Leading citizens eventually converted to the Baptist faith. Episcopalian acceptance was probably influenced by Baptist economic success. Before the War for Independence, Baptists were already on the list of Sea Island "aristocracy", rivaling Episcopalians in wealth consisting of land and slaves. This occasioned intermarriage between the once rivaling denominations. One of the most illustrious Bap-
17 tist ministers of South Carolina, Richard Fuller of Beaufort, came from
797 an Episcopalian lineage which included colonial Indian fighters, legislators, and signers of the Declaration of Independence. The Fuller family owned several Sea Islands and hundreds of slaves. The Lawton-Robert family, Baptist converts from the Huguenot sect, migrated to South Carolina from France. They organized the little Black Swamp Church upon acquiring properties at Robertville (between Beaufort and Savannah). Robertville became one of the wealthiest areas in South Carolina and the Lawton-Roberts were among the most prominent families in the Low-

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country. Other affluent Baptist-Episcopalian members of the slavocracy in the Sea Island region included the Bosticks, the Elliotts, the Popes, and the Fripps. Thus the stigma attached to Baptists subsided. By 1812 the once dissenting faith was a respectable form of worship in the Sea Islands. Lowcountry Baptists had always identified with planter interests and with slaveholding. The Reverend Holcomb lived long enough to see "the flower of Beaufort filling their seats at the Lord's table" for communion at the Baptist Church.[31]

When George Whitefield appealed to planters for religious instruction of slaves, Baptist compliance may have been more forthcoming, in some cases, than among other denominations. His remonstrances did not seem to diminish Puritan-Baptist attraction to his preaching. Whitefield, after all, was a slaveholder himself. Thus in isolated pockets of coastal Carolina and Georgia, preaching to blacks did occur and had obvious results around the time of the War for Independence and afterwards.

As previously discussed, the first organized black religious gathering under Christian auspices in the South was at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, between 1773 and 1775. That occurred on the estate of planter and Indian agent George Galphin, through the efforts of a Connecticut Baptist named Wait Palmer. David George, one of Galphin's slaves, was a convert of Palmer's, and was appointed elder over the little band of eight after being instructed in that office. David George was greatly influenced and encouraged by a black Baptist preacher named George Liele (also called George Sharp). Liele, under the guidance of Georgia white Baptists, had become a practicing exhorter. His master, Henry Sharp, a deacon of the Burke County church where Liele was "called," freed his slave, although Liele continued on with the white family. In his capacity as a preacher George Liele ministered to various plantations as well as to whites and blacks in his own church near Savannah. Liele's master, a loyalist, fought with the British and was killed. Liele remained with the British during the Savannah occupation.[32]

When the War for Independence began, slave owners prohibited ministers from visiting the plantations, fearing that information about the war, especially Dunmore's and Clinton's freedom offers, would cause black defection. With ministers no longer visiting, David George, who had experienced a call to preach under the ministrations of Liele, took over the little church, then numbering about forty. When the British overran the seacoast region, American patriots, Galphin among them,

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175 spiritual state. While slave labor produced "the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and all the superfluities we possess," they received "nothing equivalent." On the contrary, wrote Bryan, "we keep from them the key of knowledge, so that their bodies and souls perish together in our service."[37]

If Christian instruction among slaves languished in supposedly liberal coastal Georgia, in coastal South Carolina it was deplorable among many Baptists whose attachment to the former preachings of George Whitefield stopped short of missionary work among the slave masses. Baptists were interested in extending the faith, as evidenced by how quickly they spread to the coastal and upcountry frontier. But this evangelical zeal did not extend to the general slave population. Early Sea Island Baptists (567) were involved in protecting slavery, consolidating property, and maintaining a money crop. Like Episcopalians, they viewed efforts of spiritual uplift among masses of slaves as dangerous and antagonistic to economic interests.

175 The War for Independence did much to unsettle growth in the Sea Island region. Once the war ended the people engaged in reconstructing • 797 their society and reconstituting their economic priorities. Little time was spent on contemplation of their souls. In 1792, Matthew Tate, a friend of Benjamin Rush and an Episcopalian minister, became rector at St. Helena Church in Beaufort. The spiritual life was low according to Tate, who was himself primarily interested in economic advantage. Since there was no other Episcopal clergyman for 40 miles, Tate boasted of the money to be made from conducting marriages and funerals. Also the availability of single, preferably wealthy widows was a notable concern of the rector's.[38] Given such pecuniary preoccupations on the part of ministers it is understandable that the state of Christianity suffered.

175 Religion did not assume a prominent role in the lives of either Baptists 567 or Episcopalians in the coastal and Sea Islands region. Indigo, cotton, rice, slaves, and a well-planned social calendar received highest consideration. In 1766 a Philadelphian, John Bartram, visited the coastal and Sea Island regions of South Carolina and Georgia. Even at this early stage of development a certain affluence was observed. Bartram wrote in his diary that the "best inhabitants" had great farms distanced from the seacoast towns. On the farms "they keep numerous Negro slaves, who are closely employed in cultivating the ground, or sowing plank, or looking after their stock for maintenance of their masters." The farms were

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and a tower, a first indication of a notable black membership at this Island church. In 1819, the Euhaw Church reported a membership of "18 Whites and 4 Colored," and the church at Black Swamp had thirty white and one hundred black members.[42]

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Some slaves, during the "Second Great Awakening," beginning around 1800, were exposed to Christianity in Baptist churches. Often blacks were "converted" when no whites came forth. In 1800, Richard Furman of Charleston wrote to a Philadelphia Baptist minister of the success the new minister at Euhaw Church was experiencing. In nine months, "Mr Cook" had "baptized about twenty persons." Most of them "are Negroes."[43] This is a very small number, but nonetheless demonstrates that actual black membership does not tell the whole story. Obviously blacks were baptized in many instances without being given church membership. While this demonstrates black exposure to Christianity, it also illustrates the paucity of "Christian" instruction.

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Even the religious revitalization that began in the North after the War of 1812 and spread to some parts of the South, was not greatly effective in the Carolina Lowcountry. In 1821, a long-term visitor from Connecticut living in Robertville wrote:

> The Religious state of things here it is hoped is improving. A few are enquiring "What they Shall do to be saved" . . . we who have been accustomed to having ministers settled in every village must feel the dearth of ministers in this part of our country where the toilers are ripe for the harvest and seem only to want Faithful Laborers in the vineyard. . . . The inhabitants of this place are all connected by inter-marriages, and I am afraid are very wordly minded and even the Professors appear to think more of the rise and fall of cotton than the rise and progress of religion.[44]

Although Baptists had no national association, local organizations exemplify how negligible black membership was in white churches. By 1806 there were 130 Baptist churches in South Carolina, most of which were in the upcountry. Communicants totaled 10,560, 3,500 of whom were reportedly black. Sixteen years later, according to the 1822 South Carolina Baptist Convention, the number of black Baptists had not greatly increased. The Baptist Church at Charleston had a black membership large enough to allow for separate meetings with "proper" regulations by 1819. It is questionable how many of the total black church membership was made up of slaves. In the case of the Charleston Baptist Church's black membership, the majority of the congregations were free. Yet an

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around the time of Vesey's Conspiracy, most were slaves. But the upcountry, frequented by circuit riders and stimulated by numerous revivals, contained the majority of the state's 18,460 black Methodists at the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century. Thus the coastal plantations, especially in the Sea Islands, were the main target areas during the thirty years of Methodist religious efforts among the bondspeople of South Carolina, and parts of Georgia.[10]

When the South Carolina Methodist Conference met in February 1830, its Missionary Society produced a stirring report entitled "The Southern Slave Population." Authored by James O. Andrew, a slaveholding bishop from Augusta, Georgia, the document noted the lack of missionary service to slaves and lauded the attention and encouragement given by C. C. Pinckney. More significantly, the report indicated a rising concern within the Southern Methodist church. In 1831 Andrew's report was published in the national Methodist journal, indicating that a movement was under way in the regional jurisdiction of the South Carolina Conference. Bishop Andrew acknowledged that in the face of "so many obstacles," a long period of negligence had characterized Methodist attitude. Yet he insisted that the Methodist church was not unmindful of the so-called irreligion of the slaves:

> We saw the efforts made to send the Gospel to distant Pagans, and we heard of the success of those efforts with much gratification. But when, in sight of our own doors, there were thousands of immortal beings, the slaves of a superstition as degrading, and an idolatry as dark as . . . the Pagans of savage lands; and when we observed that comparatively little was doing to guide them to purity and to God, we have blushed for our own inconsistency, and longed to see put into operation such an instrumentality as should extensively and successfully, carry the Gospel to the large and increasing slave population.[11]

The difficulties and magnitude of the undertaking had until recently hindered the Church's commitment Andrew reported. But a new day was dawning. Of late, the Church was "cheered and strengthened" and much gratified by the expressed advocacy of the renowned C. C. Pinckney. The South Carolina Conference considered the words of so "notable and respected" a Carolinian to be a "valuable and powerful auxiliary" in the work undertaken. Speaking on behalf of the Methodists' missionary branch, the slaveholding bishop reiterated even more strongly themes pounded out by Pinckney: the "moral baseness" of un-Christian slaves had to be combated. Among bondspeople, stated Andrew, "the tender

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in the isolated, unhealthy Lowcountry and Sea Island regions. Some of them were buried there. One wonders how long the question of slave conversion would have lain dormant except for the efforts intended to stabilize the plantation system. This primary goal, seasoned perhaps with some element of conscience, caused a few influential slaveholders to promote the experiment. A definite parallel existed between spiritual and temporal interests. And the view that Christianization would lead to a more efficient and submissive labor force slowly gained credibility.

Despite postulations about Methodist involvement in Vesey's Conspiracy, Southern Methodists were not antislavery, and Lowcountry planters had little real reason to suspect them as harbingers of black liberation. By their own admission they were a denomination whose Southern branch believed in slavery. The South Carolina Conference's reaction to the Vesey Conspiracy was to reaffirm their proslavery position. Andrew, in his 1830 report, stated that the church's responsibility was not to contemplate slavery as an institution. Such speculations, according to Andrew, brought much "evil" to the slaves without any corresponding benefits. "We look upon the blacks just as we find them," he wrote, ". . . hoping only to bring them into the enjoyment of freedom of a higher character; freedom from the bondage of Satan, from the control of passions and lusts."[16]

Yet such statements, undoubtedly sincere, could not immediately dispel suspicion and doubt. The burgeoning abolitionist movement, and the fact that some Northerners were already going south to do what Southern clergymen had heretofore left undone, made the task of the South Carolina Methodists even more difficult. Antislavery sentiment gained momentum among Methodists and other denominations in the North. Anxiety about the abolitionists disguised as "men of the cloth" going among slaves made any missionary a suspect until proven otherwise. One Sea Island missionary in the employment of the South Carolina Conference complained to the Missionary Society:

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> My success in getting access to the colored people, as far as I flattered myself in the early part of the year, has been in some measure obstructed, growing out of the excitement got up by the abolitionists.[17]

Sea Island and Lowcountry planters were surrounded by a dense black population as compared to a paucity of whites. White communities felt particularly vulnerable. A Northern Presbyterian minister, Courtlandt

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Van Renssalaer, was forced out of Virginia as a missionary among the slaves. He then attempted to preach to the neglected bondspeople of the Sea Island and Savannah River regions in 1835 and 1836. His career was abruptly halted when a circular appeared stating that a gentleman of "high respectability" had information that Van Renssalaer held secret meetings with slaves, "and consulted with them on their means of revolt, their armies . . . when they expected to be ready. . . ." The "authorities" were alerted, and "Van Renssalaer would have been arrested but when sought for he had suddenly left." The missionary denied the charges from his Northern sanctuary and indicated they exemplified the opposition to the "work" which he and others endeavored to accomplish among the slaves.[18]

Allegations about antislavery activity being conducted by Northern missionaries, a distrust of so novel an experiment, and a traditional association of religion with rebellion evoked open hostility to Christian instruction in many cases. The idea of perfect strangers going among their "people" to preach was not one to which planters could easily adjust. The South Carolina Conference proclaimed repeatedly the official Methodist position on slavery: that it was an institution of "Divine Providence," that the issue of slavery did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Church but was "exclusively appropriate to the civil authorities," and that the Conference was resolved "not to intermeddle with it." Representing the South Carolina Conference in 1838, William Capers, Superintendent of the Missions to the Slaves, further affirmed the Methodist belief that "the Holy Scriptures . . . do unequivocally authorize the relation of master and slave." Capers, himself a slaveholder, affirmed:

> Our missionaries inculcate the duties of servants to their masters, as we find these duties stated in the Scriptures. . . . We hold that a Christian slave must be submissive, faithful and obedient . . . we would employ no one in the work who might hesitate to teach this; nor can such a one be found in the whole number of preachers in this Conference.[19]

In spite of such reassurances, skepticism among slaveholders continued and invitations to instruct Sea Island and Lowcountry slaves constituted a mere trickle in the 1830s. In a letter to William Capers, C. C. Pinckney expressed his own gratitude for the services of the Methodists. But he also stated that the majority of the seaboard planters were "still adverse to missionary efforts and give us ample cause to pray that their

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eyes may be opened." Nevertheless, missionaries increased their efforts yearly and other denominations applauded the undertaking. In 1838 an interdenominational group of influential clergymen met under the auspices of the Methodist Missionary Society and asserted their growing concern and commitment to slave conversion. They agreed that areas of the large cotton and rice plantations along the sea coast from the Savannah to the Pee Dee rivers in Georgia and South Carolina would receive the bulk of attention. In most of the state, churches existed in nearly every area, but the group admitted that even there, accommodations for blacks were insufficient. However, at least no one could say, "Negroes of the neighborhood are without the gospel." Such was not the case "on the Sea Islands, and in the delta of the rivers, where the Negroes are most numerous." These thousands had no churches accessible to them, and the interdenominational group confessed, "they are as destitute as if they were not inhabitants of a Christian land." The plantation missions were undertaken for the benefit of these slaves.[20]

Southern churches and seminaries were not long in taking note of the movement. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, as well as Methodists preached sermons on the benefits of the enterprise. Gradually, some planters, convinced of the desirability of Christian instruction, publicly declared their approval at agricultural meetings and in agricultural journals. Denominational newspapers also kept up arguments in favor of religious instruction. William Capers prepared a short catechism for the missionaries' use in instructing slaves. Arguments of appeal rarely varied. Although the interest of the plantation was preemptory, the security of the country and saving of black souls were also loudly proclaimed. The 1830s was a period of persuasion and promotion of Christian proselytizing, with the Methodist church directing the campaign and receiving widespread if not unified support from a number of quarters. In the words of one church association spokesman, discussing conditions in South Carolina and Georgia during this period, "The religious instruction of our slave population, entirely suspended in some parts of the country, through the lamentable interference of abolition fanatics, has proceeded with almost unabated diligence and steadiness of purpose."[21]

In the Sea Island region south of Charleston, Methodist missionaries acquired early access to some plantations. Two missionaries, George W. Moore and Thomas D. Turpin, arrived in 1833. Moore's appointment included Beaufort and the surrounding islands. His first charge consisted

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of two plantations and two preaching appointments in Beaufort (attended by slaves from several plantations), six plantations on Paris Island, and one plantation on each of the five remaining islands around Beaufort. Turpin's appointment in the Beaufort District, called the May and New River Mission, included Hilton Head, Bull's and Dawfuskie Islands, and the mainland between the May and New Rivers.[22]

The most successful method of gaining permission to evangelize slaves involved having a sympathetic local planter approach fellow slaveholders on behalf of the missionaries. In the Sea Islands Methodists were actively supported by William E. Baynard. The Baynard family were large slaveholders with plantation interests on Hilton Head and Edisto Islands as well as on the mainland. Baynard was a frequent intermediary between planters and missionaries. Writing to him in 1833, one Hilton Head planter expressed his confidence in the cause:

> I am anxious that the mission to the colored people in this community be continued . . . that the gospel should be preached to them in their cabins and the Scriptures explained in such a plain and simple manner that they may fully understand what true religion is.[23]

Baynard was not always so successful. While some slaveholders simply refused to allow missionaries on their plantations, others gave the experiment a try but found "results" discouraging. For example, William Pope, Sr., Baptist patriarch of a Sea Island family who owned the largest amount of aggregate acreage on St. Helena, Dawfuskie, and Hilton Head, answered Baynard's inquiry of 1834 in the negative. Pope felt that Thomas Turpin, sent the previous year, had gained few converts. He wrote:

> If I am not deceived one or two of them [the slaves] will long remember him with gratitude . . . but am inclined to think he has not met with decided success . . . he has had to encounter some difficulty, discouragements and prejudices which he has not been able to fully overcome—tho' he has certainly laboured faithfully, and been zealous and diligent in the discharge of his duty.

Pope concluded his letter by stating that the missionary's services would be discontinued since the "means and opportunities" of religious instruction had improved; there were "now two churches on this Island [Hilton Head] in which there is service at least twice a month."[24]

There appeared to be a consensus among certain planters in the May and New River Mission to withhold cooperation from Turpin and the Methodists. James Sealy, also a planter on Hilton Head Island, wrote to

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Baynard in a letter dated the same day as Pope's. Sealy expressed hope that "the people" had profited from the missionary's presence, but he "could see nothing of it." Sealy, like Pope, withheld consent for the missionary's coming within the confines of his plantation.[25] Denominational rivalry may have been a factor in decisions to deny Methodists access to the slaves, and Baptists expressed the most skepticism toward missionaries. But more significantly, the Methodist-Baptist controversy provides insight into religious activity among the slaves prior to the missionaries' coming.

Thomas Turpin, assigned to the May and New River Mission in 1833, had his own opinions about the state of religion in the Sea Islands, and defended himself regarding his unsuccessful efforts among the bondspeople. Turpin had access to about 1,000 adult slaves, one third of whom were in the Baptist church and in the "Negro societies, and all of them under Baptist influence." Yet these slaves rarely saw the pastor of the church or attended its services. Instead, Turpin related, the slaves had "societies organized among themselves." According to the missionary, "these societies were very corrupt." Turpin described a scene at one black society gathering on Bull's Island in which a particular type of penance, drawn from African traditions, was engaged in as punishment for sin:

> They had three degrees of punishment, and . . . the punishment was inflicted agreeably to the magnitude of the crime, according to their view of the crime. If the crime was of the first magnitude, the perpetrator had to pick up a quart of benne seed . . . poured on the ground by the priest; and if of the second, a quart of rice; and if of the third a quart of corn; . . . they also had high seats and low seats, but incorrect views relative to those who ought to be punished; . . . it was also a rule among them never to divulge the secret of stealing: and if it should be divulged . . . that one had to go on the low seat or pick up the benne seed.[26]

The rite the slaves engaged in is reminiscent of high-low seats and a pyramid of degrees in the Poro and Sande in Upper Guinea, and some secret societies in Angola. The Poro inner circle was a social regulating as well as religious body. It stopped quarrels, caught, tried, condemned, and punished social criminals. In Poro-Sande culture, high seats belonged to a few old religious leaders of high degree.[27] But the way Gullahs employed the use of high-low degrees was unique and reflected their ability to adapt a past tradition to the organization of their slave community. The association of the communal and the spiritual is evident,

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since this regulation took place within a religious context, ostensibly under the rubric of Christianity. High and low seats in Gullah society assumed a meaning different from African Poro-Sande society. But the function of regulation and community control was still present. The Gullahs reserved the "low seat" for those who betrayed community interests by divulging "the secret of stealing," undoubtedly from the master. This demonstrates the seriousness of solidarity among the people. Thus picking up the benne seed was reserved for the worst of crimes "according to their view of the crime." While the Methodist missionary believed the slaves had incorrect ideas about who should be punished, slaves themselves were using an internal logic with little reference to Protestant conceptions of sin. This Gullah interpretation of sin was at variance with their Christian instruction. A sense of contrition for the safety and peace of the plantation or out of fear of the Christian God was not a motivating issue. For the Gullahs, moral guilt fell on those who forsook socioreligious authority and loyalty in the slave quarters. The presence and influence of black leadership was also revealed as the "punishments" were administered by a "priest." This implies no relationship to the Christian church to which some of the slaves belonged. Missionary Turpin believed the rites strangely akin to Catholicism. Obviously they were not. But in West Africa Poro-Sande priests and priestesses were responsible for administering justice and punishment. Thus this role had some cultural-historical continuity. Slaves saw nothing incongruous about adopting elements of Christian religion and adapting those to aspects of their traditional spiritual heritage still serviceable in the New World setting.

The penance for the "sin" of divulging the secret of stealing was no brief activity, but a rather trying feat. A "gentleman" residing on Bull's Island informed Turpin that an individual usually could not pick up all the scattered benne seeds in one night. And "if it was not done in one night they had to continue until they did it." Thus while the benne seed ritual was not comparable in degree to African punishments instituted by the Poro Council for community crimes, there is a symbolic reference. While representing a form of censure for erring members, it was not the way "Christianized" slaves were expected to interpret the concept of "sin." Turpin stated in his report that having to contend with "all this superstition and ignorance, together with their prejudices against Methodism," he had added few church members. Nor, reported Turpin,

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did he strive to do so, "but rather . . . to beat down their prejudices and to establish a better principle of religion among them, all of which I should not presume any person in this low country would attempt to contradict."[28]

Planters in the May and New River Mission region were offended by statements implying that they tolerated practices such as the one Turpin discussed. Sea Island Baptists felt under attack for not instructing black converts in "true" principles of Christianity and for baptizing slaves without scrutinizing their religious life. Turpin was smarting from the cold reception he received from planters. Turpin did in fact infer that some planters were aware of and permitted un-Christian practices among slaves baptized as Baptists. It was after all a "gentleman" of the Island who had explained to Turpin the workings of the benne seed penance he had observed. Methodist unpopularity among Sea Island planters was recognized at the Missionary Society Headquarters. Soon after the report was circulated, Turpin was removed from the May and New River Mission, and assigned to the John and Wadmalaw Islands Mission in the Charleston District. Turpin insisted, however, that he did not intend to discredit the planters. Nor, he said, did he mean that planters knowingly sanctioned "corrupt" practices among the slaves. Turpin merely wished to point out how irreligious so-called converted slaves were. Through the pages of the *Southern Christian Advocate*, he made a somewhat cynical apology, which undoubtedly did little to assuage the ire of Sea Island planters:

> But it [the report] appears to have injured the feelings of many of the Baptist friends. I did not intend to injure their feelings, nor any other persons, notwithstanding though, it has been said that I have "shot a ball particularly at the Baptists, and in its glance it was hit the Episcopalians." If it has made any mortal wound by its being received in a light different from what I intended, I feel it my duty to heal the wound.[29]

Turpin had indeed offended the planters, especially his comments on the slaves' lack of "truly religious" training, despite Baptist church membership. He believed that the "converted" slaves made a mockery of Christianity. These slaves who "scarcely ever saw the pastor" of their church were members of the First African Church in Savannah. Andrew Bryan's nephew, Andrew Marshall, was the pastor. In 1830, church membership was 2,417. Although a black church, whites were responsible for control and for the conduct of its members. Whites came to the

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175 The South Carolina Conference wanted favorable, optimistic reports. In their efforts to absolve the Southern Church from Northern reproach, Methodists expected missionaries to cease concentrating on the nature of "superstitions" among the slaves, on "moral degradation," or sect rivalry. Such emphasis suggested that the enterprise was not successful. Also to focus on planter impropriety undermined the confidence the Methodist church hoped to instill among the slaveholding class. Perhaps as a result of Turpin's unpopular "Missionary Sketch," late in 1833 William Capers published a notice to missionaries stating that the sort of information then being received was unsatisfactory. "General remarks," wrote Capers, "by no means furnish the requisite information." The Superintendent of Missions instructed each missionary to provide a quarterly report which, if nothing else, answered the following types of questions:

—how many preaching places have you
—how many schools, teachers, scholars, how many of these are natives
—how many since the last report
—Revivals.[32]

After Turpin's controversial report, statistics and discussions of Christian-type experiences dominated missionary information from the field. It was more significant to detail the conversion of an old African-born slave than to outline what appeared to be latent types of "Roman Catholic" ceremonies. The former type of religious experiences were dramatized in the pages of the *Southern Christian Advocate* in the 1840s and later.

175 799 Missionaries assigned to the Sea Islands and coastal regions maintained a healthy optimism, but reports were often discouraging. Early support from slaveholders was spasmodic and intermittent, and bondspeople took a lax attitude toward Methodist discipline. In 1835, John Coburn reported from Beaufort that, while his charge had increased to include twenty-one plantations with 400 children under catechetical instruction, "the prospects of this mission are not considered flattering." He blamed "interference" and "foreign intermeddling" for his lack of success, yet recommended that the station be continued for at least another year. In 1836 Coburn indicated that improvement had taken place, yet church membership dropped considerably because of many expulsions and the fact that some planters had withdrawn their slaves from the mission. His work was also greatly hindered because the islands, separated by wide waters, were frequently impassable for small boats.[33]

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The "interference" and "foreign intermeddling" discussed by Coburn came from two sources. First, Gullah leaders continued to exert influence and they resented as well as resisted supersedence of their authority. Secondly, a growing number of slaves professed affiliation with Baptists of the region. Many missionaries complained that these alleged black Baptists were unfamiliar with Christian doctrines. Thus from the missionaries' point of view, the complexity was actually three-tiered: a powerful black leadership holding sway through beliefs and practices apart from Protestantism, a conflict with black "professors of the faith" whom missionaries considered mere "pretenders," and both problems compounded by the skepticism of Baptist and Episcopalian slaveholders. The missionaries admitted that religious instruction under such circumstances was a formidable task.[34]

Methodist Sea Island missionary activity experienced various periods of growth and decline. Methodism was persistent, but there was never a massive moment into the church on the part of the Gullahs. By 1839, the May and New River Mission had been discontinued and the limited number of converts absorbed by the Beaufort and Savannah River organizaiton. Also by 1839 Methodists created a new mission in the Beaufort district, called Pocotaligo, and another in the Charleston district called Edisto Island Mission, including Jehossee and Fenwick Islands. Edisto was by far the most prosperous of the Sea Island missions. By 1842 Beaufort Mission embraced thirty plantations but contained only 310 members, with 370 children under instruction. The Pocotaligo missionary ministered at nine plantations, had 295 church members, and 156 children under catechetical instruction. Progress was slow in these areas compared to other missions north of Charleston and in the upcountry. For example, the North Santee Mission embraced only fifteen plantations but had 528 church members and the Black and Pee Dee Rivers Mission covered twenty-five plantations with 1,180 church members. By the time of national division within the Methodist church in 1844, the Beaufort Mission had dropped to twenty plantation appointments, and Pocotaligo still served only nine. The Edisto Mission however, maintained steady progress.[35]

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Figures relating to church membership are not impressive considering the thousands of slaves in the coastal and Sea Island region. Still, Methodist missionaries remained active there until 1861, even after it became apparent that Baptist influence would predominate. Not only were white

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oped through African cultural convergence. Their pattern of speech was one example of this. "Their language," wrote one missionary in 1840, "though . . . understood by themselves, cannot be by one unaccustomed to them, without great study and application." It was a peculiar creation—an English patois. As previously discussed, Lorenzo Dow Turner's linguistic study of Gullah, conducted over a fifteen-year period, involved many former slave informants. He views Gullah as a creolized form of English with elements of survivals from African languages spoken by ethnic groups brought to South Carolina and Georgia. Turner found most retentions present in vocabulary but also in elements of sound, syntax, morphology, intonation, and word formation. Yet as previously mentioned, Gullah was even more than a distinct pidgin English or dialect, but a means of expressing oneself in the most graphic and sometimes literal sense. Arthur Sumner, a Northern teacher on the Sea Islands during the Civil War, found it "easier to understand a foreign language":

> 'Talk we get dinner,' means 'do you mean that I shall get dinner?'
>
> Byron came to me this morning with a message from his mother.—'Ma says, if you give her some trade. . . .' Can you make it out? Oh, dull girl! The meaning is clear. Ma wants to know if you will give her some thread.[48]

William F. Allen, another Northern teacher, also wrote about the Gullah's peculiar interpretations and usage of English. For instance, "stand," referred to the state or condition of a person, place or thing. On one occasion, Allen, teaching sentence structure to a class of children, had them go over to the window and then asked them the color of the sky. "Nobody could tell," and most of them "stared straight ahead at Jimmy, who was in the yard, and I half expected them to say 'black.' " Finally "Abraham" ventured "white," then "red." Dick, a former house man, passed by the window and Allen expressed his frustration, to which Dick replied promply, " 'lick'em":

> "Well Dick," said I, here's a chance for you to lick Tom, who was appearing around a corner of the barn. "Tom, what's the color of the sky?" Tom stared at the sky, but said nothing. Dick grinned. "Tom, how sky *stan*'?" "Blue" shouted Tom.[49]

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Missionaries categorized black spirituality as "curious superstitions" or as types of worship reminiscent of Catholicism. Gullahs had their own religious leaders who sometimes professed Christianity and solicited

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sanction from planters and overseers as the "spiritual elders" of the people. One St. Helena planter who spent little time on the island, wrote to the Methodist missionary assigned there in 1833 that he hoped the Methodists could improve the religious condition among the Gullahs. The biggest problem according to the planters was the black leaders whose control had to be broken.[50]

Thus missionaries vied with black spiritual advisers for religious leadership in the slave community.[51] There was no way for the Methodists to counter the influence of slaves whom the Gullahs regarded as spiritual advisers but who made no claim to Christianity. Methodists felt that under Christian instruction customs and practices perpetrated by this leadership would die out in time. But the missionaries believed black leaders who fused "paganism" with Christianity were most detrimental to the Methodist cause. These leaders had either to be set on the "true" path or their influence undermined. The competition proved difficult. Everywhere they went among the Gullahs, missionaries found black leaders successfully impeding Methodist influence. From Beaufort Mission, T. E. Ledbetter reported in 1836 that although some "pious" Episcopalian planters allowed missionaries to preach to slaves, he saw no evidence of progress:

> . . . we combat a great many falso notions, and . . . fatal doctrines which have been elderly imbibed by the colored population through the instrumentality of ignorant and superstitious teachers among themselves. And nothing is more difficult to overcome than a strongly prejudiced understanding . . . many among them are opposed to us.[52]

Some missionaries, even without planter approval, attempted completely to halt black spiritual leadership. Others hoped to communicate with Gullahs by recognizing or even appointing certain "elders." Both tactics often bred frustration. From Pocotaligo Mission in Beaufort District, John N. Davies reported in 1840:

> A black man, one of them [the slaves] whom they claim for their spiritual father, and, as they say, "had brought them through the spirit," became corrupted and inflated with self-importance—I gave him a close talk, with a design of moving him, when he held up the wand of his sweeping influence by asserting that all the children [the people] would follow him. As we have no authority to visit them at the plantation we chose the only mode of saving them, . . . to select and appoint a zealous and upright man, of their number to be with him as an aid and guard; meanwhile a noise came from abroad of large depredations being

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committed which implicated this and sevgral plantations . . . nearly all have ceased to attend and we fear they are rushing to ruin—Lord have mercy upon them and upon me.[53]

This missionary's report typifies one significant aspect of white attempts to usurp black leadership — that of replacing an individual who could not be subordinated with one seemingly more controllable. Undoubtedly, the "zealous and upright" man was more cooperative than pious. The audacious missionary had no access to the plantation where his spiritual rival lived, nor apparently did he have the good wishes and confidence of the planter. Some planters left it completely up to the Gullahs as to whether or not they attended missionary services, and others specifically forbade it; this contributed to the continued presence and influence of black leaders. Moreover, as the Davies' account reveals, slaves given passes to attend preaching appointments often found other more lucrative or entertaining means of utilizing their temporary mobility. Fear of this limited movement and assembly was a continual obstruction in obtaining unified support for religious instruction from the slaveholders. When Christian conversion took on a new seriousness in 1845, large slave gatherings for religious purposes, never popular, were discontinued and the emphasis shifted to individual and family instruction on plantations. The latter type of religious teaching eventually brought the Methodists more success.[54]

Still many Gullahs displayed skepticism toward the Methodists and resisted offending their own leaders. From Pocotaligo, John N. Davies continued to inform the public of his problems:

> We have had some trouble at another preaching place, occasioned by the puffing up of father S., as he is called, but plantation authority forbids his guiding the people. They have appeared spellbound, not to move or think without him. He a poor creature of dust imagines himself to be the Great Shepherd whose voice alone "the sheep know," and whom alone the true sheep will follow. . . . We visit the plantations and explain as far as possible. God grant us brighter days and better times.

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But despite only marginal encouragement from both planters and slaves, the missionaries continued to "suffer and rejoice and pray and labor." And from the beginning, though suspicious and cautious, some slaves came to hear the missionaries by choice. The fact of their attendance was considered progress as expressed by one optimistic missionary in 1835:

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Although the colored people were generally in a lukewarm state and inattentive to preaching when I commenced, there has been an encouraging improvement, whether it is the novelty of the thing that has drawn them out, or the special regard had to them by their owners in getting a preacher exclusively for them, I know not, but one thing is certain . . . they attend the appointments very regularly and a deep concern is manifested in the congregation generally."

The Gullah's increasing attention to Methodist presence can be understood on a number of levels. In the life of a slave any occasion which brought a cessation from labor was welcomed. One can imagine the excitement as well as skepticism in the quarters when news spread of the coming of a white "spiritual man" whose sole purpose was to administer to slaves. Certainly their interest was measured. Yet for these isolated African-Americans the special attention itself was something new. Furthermore, preaching places facilitated gathering of bondspeople from various plantations, providing opportunities to visit with friends, relatives, and probably lending a gaiety and sense of freedom to the event. Missionaries recorded little lasting progress of a religious nature as a result of their preaching at these large assemblies. Planters insisted the gatherings produced more harm to the system. But these occasions appealed to the slaves for reasons other than the spiritual content of the sermons. Preaching stations provided many with their only opportunity to be away from the plantation. Monthly meetings became convivial holiday-type excursions, adding to the few outlets in a life too often dulled by pointless, profitless toil. The gatherings provided a reason for attending to personal hygiene, to don whatever their "best" attire consisted of—faded though colorful turbans and caps; their one pair of shoes; tattered, coarse and worn, yet carefully laundered gingham skirts and breeches of iridescent check. Missionaries reported with frustration that slaves readily engaged in the singing and attentively responded to the prayers, but many slept through whole sermons although at the meeting's end they heartily shook hands and thanked the missionary "fur de Wud."[56] Gullah gratitude was probably not so much for the Word as for what it represented in terms of offering an alleviation of routine. Such comments may have been expressions of cynicism. Yet some missionaries evinced a genuine concern and imparted to the Gullahs a different sense of worth and dignity. The most positive and uplifting principles of the "religion of the heart" seeped through the lessons on obedience, subordination, and prostration. And the Gullahs came to recognize a

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relationship between Christian imagery and their own historical position. This was the triumph for which the committed amongst the missionaries labored. They added but few "true" Methodists to church rolls but won the "heart" of many slaves. Nevertheless, even at its soul searching, heartrending best, slaves employed Methodism as an exculpation from bondage. Those preaching among the slaves imparted a spiritual ideology founded upon this premise. The dualism of the religion was not lost on the Gullahs.

In the period before the national division of the Methodist church, missionary activity was circumspectly observed by slaveholders who feared that antislavery doctrines, inadvertently or otherwise, might be disseminated. The South Carolina Conference instructed that the content of sermons emphasize the "duty" of servants to masters, not because it would avert suspicion, but because the state episcopacy sincerely believed this was the most important element of Christianity to be taught to slaves. In any case, the textbook prepared by William Capers for the use of plantation missionaries, referred to as a catechism, reflected an interpretation of the Christian religion to an enslaved people. The introductory section consisted of hymns, prayers, commandments, the Creed, and portions of the scripture having to do with duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, and servants and masters. The remainder of the little book was in question-and-answer form, obviously designed for slave children. This portion of the text covered parts of the Bible that the South Carolina Conference specifically wanted pointed out, namely, the creation, the fall, and the life and death of Christ.[57]

For sermons, St. Paul provided the missionaries with favorite subjects and was also the apostle most quoted by proslavery elements. Other scriptural texts used ostensibly relegated blacks to a fate of perpetual bondage and aimed at convincing them to accept enslavement as the natural order. Slaves were taught a selective Christianity—a doctrine of contentment and humility. No text espousing such scriptural tenets as "The truth shall make you free" or "The laborer is worthy of his hire" could be preached. There was of course none of the militant Christianity discovered and expounded by the black rebels in Charleston years before. Most of the Old Testament was ignored except when certain passages could serve as a conduit further to reinforce white domination.

One account of the narrow latitude of preaching was left by Lunds-

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175 The "class meeting" was an important method of personal instruction and among the slaves its function was broadened in an effect to quicken their interest in Christianity. In "class," adults were given instruction, doctrines were explained, and general check-ups were made on the progress of individuals. Here the missionary asked and answered individual questions and slaves related the nature of their religious experiences. Also, through examinations in "class meetings" missionaries ascertained the state of Christianity on the plantation, and decided who was ready for church membership. Furthermore, since "class" was held on individual estates, the missionaries could have more impact than at the preaching places. In "class," the missionary could, if he chose, be less didactic and more intimate. Some missionaries elaborated on the most dramatic portions of the Bible, hence capturing the Gullahs' imagination. Through these gatherings the missionary became acquainted with his large "flock," usually getting to know the adults and children by name. He ultimately became a familiar face on the plantations he visited, sometimes welcomed and sometimes resented. William Capers wrote to the slave missionaries:

> Class meetings are especially ours. A missionary should emphatically be these three things—a preacher, a catechist, and a class leader. He must be the class leader, whoever may engage to assist him. . . . Unvaried pains should be taken to instruct them in the nature of Christian experience, both by remarks to the class in general, and to each individual. . . . Organization is a main thing in Methodism, and a main thing for missions. Without it there can be no efficient training, little permanent instruction, no order, no discipline.[40]

But "organization," "order," or "discipline" did not impress the Gullahs as much as the sincerity of motive some missionaries conveyed as they acquainted themselves with their charges. Preachers were required to attend the pastoral needs of their widespread congregation. Although some neglected this feature of their duties, others engaged in the work with deliberate gravity. Many missionaries felt more able to open the slaves' heart to Christianity by this method. Some of the most interesting 175 "Missionary Sketches" printed in the *Southern Christian Advocate* were •799 written by A. M. Chreitzberg, stationed on the Beaufort Mission and elsewhere in the Sea Island region. Chreitzberg wrote from the Sea Islands, summarizing his duties outside the pulpit. He provided illuminating insights into the ways some missionaries merited gratitude and confidence from some of the bondspeople:

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It is not only the duty of the missionary to catechize the children and preach to the adults, but also to visit the sick and aged, and it is here that many a triumph has been achieved for his Lord. Many a dark and benighted soul has been brought into the light and liberty of the Gospel. Here, too, does he frequently prepare himself for the exercises of the pulpit, for it is here that he learns the way to the negro's heart, and becomes acquainted with his ideas of God and religion. The negro knows that his minister is not ashamed to enter his smoky cabin, to take him by his rough and toil-hardened hand, and talk to him about the way to heaven, or to kneel beside his bed, offer prayer in his behalf, and to pour into his heart the consolation of God's word. It is this that frequently takes his heart captive, and binds him to the cross.[41]

Here then was the religion of the warm heart at its spiritually redeeming best among the Gullahs. A disarming warmth of feeling, an effort to bridge, spiritually at least, the gap between black and white, slave and free was to serve a definite purpose. Such acts, seemingly prompted purely by human kindness, deeply affected the Gullahs, so unaccustomed to being objects of concern among whites except in matters related to labor. Gradually, the more seasoned missionaries like Chreitzberg began to stimulate a "change of heart" in the slaves. Especially affecting was the adaptation of some sermons and lectures to the daily lives and fortunes of the Gullahs. Hence they came to identify elements of Christianity with their own circumstances. Skillful variation of preaching methods, coupled with a fraternal spirit which the missionaries demonstrated toward the Gullahs, was effective. By the mid-1840s a goodly number of slaves had "professed" their conversion to Christianity under Methodist tutelage.

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Missionaries such as Chreitzberg took full advantage of opportunities to service their black congregations in the hope of winning more converts. Below Chreitzberg describes the value to be derived from officiating at a Gullah night funeral:

> "What" says the not-to-be-disturbed-at-night Pastor of a Chapel of Ease, "put yourself to the trouble of burying a *dead* negro?" Why not? We have unsuperable objections to burying a *living* one, but see no reason why the last sad office of the Church should not be performed over the remains of the black man. Has he no affections, are there no weeping friends to be consoled. . . . But apart from this, may not the living be effectually warned? When the dead man lies before them in all his helplessness, stricken down in his prime and (as in this case) suddenly called to the final account,—what better time to read to them a lesson on the uncertainty of life.

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These were golden opportunities for the missionary. The entire plantation gathered to see a body laid to rest in "its narrow house." The preacher first consoled the sorrowful widow, bidding her to trust God, "the husband of the widow and father of the fatherless." He then addressed the dead man's fellow servants on the necessity of preparing for death: "In a word I preached Jesus and the resurrection, and by the glimmering of the lightwood fire, was the burial service read and the body committed to the dust." Upon leaving the plantation late that night, the missionary was moved by thoughts which were probably not very different from thoughts which the slaves who had just witnessed the burial might have, "thoughts on life, on life's duties, on life's end: of the wants and woes of the world."[62]

Once again the missionary capitalized on an opportunity to involve himself in the black community and the slaves' experience. His efforts to share in and add meaning to life and death among the bondspeople helped make him a presence in the quarters even if he came but twice a month. He was, for his caring, often looked upon fondly. Although the missionary represented the same forces of oppression as did the master, the slaves perceived the spiritual arm of the dominant society as perhaps its one redeeming quality, a contradiction to serve the slaves' interests. Still the fondness was more on an individual level. A well-meaning Methodist like Chreitzberg was accepted though all he preached and taught was not. From the slaves' vantage point it was unwise to completely relinquish that which had previously provided spiritual solace and replace it with something new and as yet untried. For missionaries able to secure access to plantations, spiritual rewards might be inspiring if short-lived. Through catechism, "class meeting," and carrying out of pastoral duties, Methodists experienced some triumphs for Christianity. Missionaries never succeeded in dethroning black leadership and felt that this influence continually created obstacles to Christian conversion.[63] Nevertheless, Methodists proved to be relentless in the dissemination of their doctrines. As Gullahs grew more attentive to the preachers' words, they discarded the incongruous and discordant features of the instruction and fashioned the religion of slaveholders into something peculiarly their own.

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One of the most significant effects that Methodism had on Gullahs was in the creation of the religious music of these slaves. Some scholars argue that the actual source of Gullah religious songs can be traced to Methodist hymns and tunes sung at camp meetings. Certainly Methodist

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hymns were adopted by the Gullahs and other slaves. Francis Asbury traveled the seacoasts of Georgia and South Carolina frequently. While he gained few white converts, he was impressed with the black response to his preaching. During the Civil War, musicologists and others, fascinated by Gullah songs, noted that what was sometimes called a "Negro song," was of white origin, especially the so-called religious songs. But to these white melodies, the Gullahs added their own "spirit and relish," giving a "peculiar individuality and nationality" to the music. Thus it is pointless and probably inaccurate to insist that whites and blacks did not create sacred music together when they worshipped together. Such was the case at camp meetings and revivals. Still these gatherings were not as common in the Lowcountry as they were elsewhere. Some writers argue that the camp meeting was distinctly a pineland and upcountry institution. Although evidence indicates that a few camp meetings were held in the rice communities—the hinterlands of the Sea Islands—we find no record of its presence on any of the Islands. The influence of the domestic slave trade, black-white cultural borrowing, and diffusion were all factors in the creation and development of African-American music. Nevertheless, a unique continuity in religious songs can be found in the Sea Islands and coastal lowlands. There were indeed two types of religious music among the Gullahs who adopted Christianity: those songs and hymns learned from white religious instructors and mainly Methodist in origin, and those representing the product of the Gullah's own creativity and imagination, generally referred to as spirituals or prayer songs.[44]

The primary influence of Methodist preachers on the development of spirituals was in providing Gullahs with raw material for their songs. From past spiritual traditions these African-Americans inherited a mysticism, sense of drama, and creative antecedents that aided them in expressing and interpreting through song the apocalyptic and miraculous elements of biblical narration already rich in symbolic imagery. Also, New Testament biblical lore was not unlike the Gullahs' own oppression and suffering. From the Sea Islands in 1843, A. M. Chreitzberg provides examples of the spontaneous creation of spirituals. In delivering his message, the missionary enforced the concepts of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." At the conclusion of the meeting, the group was "much affected" by a "soft female voice" singing:

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Dis berry same Jesus, dis berry same Jesus,
We heares dese people de talk about;
Dis berry same Jesus . . .

Chreitzberg finished his labors and headed back to Beaufort by boat. Undoubtedly the black boatmen had heard his sermon. It was a dark night and the effect of the scene was heightened by "one of those thundergusts, so frequent in our latitudes." Chreitzberg and his associate sat at the stern of the boat, comfortably "gazing at the clouds." The lightening gleamed in the distance, "with the sullen roll of the distant thunder":

We were sitting at ease in the stern of the boat, suddenly a sound struck upon our ear, that we can liken to nothing save the shriek of a lost spirit. This we found to be the chorus of a song the boat hands were preparing to sing, the chorus we cannot write; it was something between a groan and the cry,—"have mercy"; and was sung at the end of every line.

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O Lord, O Lord! what shall we do?
What shall we do, what shall we do?
What shall we do for a hiding place;
No hiding place for sinner here.
We run to de sea—de sea run dry;
We run to de rock—de rock da sink;
We run to de tree—de tree ketch fire;
We run to de grave—de grave bus open;
We run to de door—de door shut close;
We wring we hands, we grine we feet,
We cry O Lord, O Lord, O Lord,
No hidin' place for sinner here!

The words written, may only serve to excite a smile, but when sung, the effect is directly the reverse; as in the intensity of excitement, one holds his breath to catch every intonation of the voice; he will, in spite of himself, be affected to tears.[45]

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The Gullahs sense of their own human frailty was expressed in their spirituals. Illness, floggings, fatigue from overwork, and the ubiquity of death were features of daily existence. The harsh Sea Island bondage must have contributed to a longing for a better world at best or for another one at the very least. For some slaves an eternal reward would justify a life that was often painful and joyless yet not without hope. Some conscious rationale regarding a future being might ease a portion of the strong sense of injustice felt toward the present, and fill gaps left

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175 764 533 burial scene such as the one above prompted the creation of a most poignant Gullah spiritual. It was recorded during the Civil War by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Commander of the First South Carolina Volunteers. He considered it "the most poetic of all their songs."

(539)

I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;
Lay dis body down.
I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight
To lay dis body down.
I'll walk in de graveyard, I'll walk through de graveyard,
To lay dis body down.
I'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;
Lay dis body down.
I go to de Judgment in de evinin' ob de day
When I lay dis body down.
And my soul and your soul will meet in de day
When I lay dis body down.[67]

175 771 799 567 Certainly Gullahs wanted to believe in a bondless futurity, and many accepted assurances of the missionaries, if not their discipline. Undoubtedly, a number of Gullahs felt that their existence on earth offered so little and mortal doom was so certain that nothing was gambled by adopting Christianity. Their imaginations and aspirations were quickened by inspiring parables, stimulating renditions of undeserved agonies of the long-suffering man-god, his earthly demise, and ultimate triumphant rebirth. The parallels were clearly hard to resist.

Thus it might appear that the hopes and expectations of planters such as C. C. Pinckney were realized—that as professors of Christianity, slaves resigned themselves to their circumstances in return for the hope of a heavenly future. Yet it is a mistake to interpret the Gullahs' acceptance of some Christian teachings as a reflection of negative attitudes toward earthly life. Nor did such teachings instill a sense of futility and resignation. Christianity as interpreted by the slaves did not induce them to disavow the present as much as it served to mitigate the inhumane features of their existence as slaves. For the Gullahs, Christianity was a spiritual release from anxieties, frustrations, and animosities, providing a frame of reference to understand their position as bondspeople. In this sense the religion of the slaveholders was diluted, becoming for the slaves a source of strength embodied in their use of Christian ideology as a personification of their will to freedom. Major emphasis of slave religion was not "otherworldly." What Gullahs accepted in Christianity did not

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prevent the kind of defensive acts which the planters anticipated would cease. Flight, theft, and reluctance to labor were means of undermining plantation order and were acts of resistance that continued to plague planters although more and more blacks became "converted."[68] True, they did not rise in revolt. Memories of the consequences of failed rebellion attempts and strong kinship ties encouraged another type of resistance involving less individual risk while creating more collective energy. The goal after all was freedom. Doctrines of the New Testament exposed the Gullahs to a kind of freedom in a spiritual sense but also upheld their right to physical liberty and equality.

Gullah reaction to Christianity under Methodist tutelage was complex. On the one hand, the slaves responded to the warmth and tolerance demonstrated by missionaries. Acts of sincerity and kindness induced the slaves to take an interest in Methodist teachings. Once Gullahs applied Christianity to their own daily lives, they grasped how its tenets could, in some ways, reflect the nature of their experiences as a people. On the other hand, the paradox inherent in Christian teaching as presented by the Methodists did not escape them. Gullahs rejected doctrines instructing them to be dutiful and obedient to slave masters, but embraced the teachings about the suffering of Christ, the resurrection, and the impartiality of a future judge who would right past wrongs. One finds no evidence of spirituals applauding an obedient slave, admonishing a disobedient one, or warning a slave against the retribution extracted by God for "crimes" against a slave master. The benne seed ritual evinced just the opposite implication. Contrary to the planter's desire, slaves did not fear "another tribunal," and as "Christians," continued stealing corn and rice, burning cotton, and fleeing to the swamps and marshes. If anything, the introduction of Christianity among the Gullahs enhanced their justification for deploring the system of bondage, and provided sound arguments for what was sensed all along—the equality of humankind.

The strongest reaction against Methodism existed because of the cultural barrier between missionaries and Gullahs. Although early white Methodism accepted emotional expressions as signs of godliness, missionaries among the Gullahs emphasized a primarily stodgy instructional approach to Christianity. Methodists permitted and applauded the emotional outpourings characterizing Gullah spirituals. But other physical manifestations were often viewed as "ungodly." Missionaries noted that

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Gullahs were "easily excited," and claimed that it was necessary "to instruct them in distinguishing between animal feeling and a real work of grace." Methodists frowned upon Gullah paroxysms, not viewing these as manifestations of Christian fervor but as non-Christian or "natural" means of expressive outlet, born of older traditions. In any case, black impetuosity had to be eradicated just as the violins and banjos had to be silenced. Generally speaking, Methodism among the Gullahs can be partly described as E. P. Thompson implicitly viewed it among British workers—a religion of the heart that sometimes attempted to stifle spontaneity of the mind and soul.[69] Slaves were rarely allowed to be themselves in the presence of Methodist emissaries. This fact, coupled with Gullah preference for a presentation of religion (or a religious presentation) in more original and familiar terms, lost the Methodist church many black converts.

Acceptance of Christianity by the Gullahs, as presented by their Methodist instructors, was more of a process of coming to terms than a total commitment. Christianity was incorporated into, but did not immediately supersede, all of their previously held beliefs and practices. The missionaries realized this, reported it with disappointment, and hoped for a better day. Such was the case with the adult generation of Gullahs in the 1830s, and this continued to be a major factor in the 1840s as well.[70] On the isolated Sea Islands a certain Old World cultural similitude contributed to the retention of communal and cultural components. Traditions inspired by Africanity and infused with Gullah folk Christianity remained identifiable well past the antebellum years. Nevertheless, Africanisms outlasting the capture, the long march, and the culminating humiliation of foreign servitude had to be preserved in a vestigial state. In addition, commingling of various ethnic groups indicates that cultural diffusion was also an important factor as native ceremonies and customs were renewed and exchanged. Therefore, what was retained of African religion and spirituality was culled from the customs, beliefs, and practices of a number of West African peoples. Thus Gullah-English dialect may be a pidgin influenced mainly by Tshi (Gold Coast), KiKongo (Kongo-Angola), and Mande (Upper Guinea) linguistic patterns. But Gullah spiritual and communitarian features bear strong resemblance to traditions of Upper Guinea and BaKongo peoples. When the Methodists arrived among the Gullahs, they probably found a syncretism of African customs and practices sprinkled with snatches of Protestantism borrowed

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from Baptist and Episcopalian masters, and limited contact with black preachers.

The Methodists' systematic religious instruction provided Gullahs with the first opportunity for a uniform type of religious culture. This socio-religious nexus did not vary from plantation to plantation or from island to island. It was based on a moral philosophy, not precluding the preservation to some extent of a continued faith in the customs of African-born forebears. The emerging religious association resembled and gave expression to a world view brought from Africa, common to the Gullahs, and suited to their circumstances. More than any other features of the Christian religion, the Gullahs embraced its moral virtues—humanity, humility, fairness, a sense of the dignity of the sufferer, and belief in the merit of all people. No matter how one regards these values, they are celebrated in Christianity, and it was this spirit in Methodist teachings that the Gullahs accepted. The letter of the law, in a strict Mosaic form, and the Pauline sanction of servitude were rejected. There was little room for internalization of the dogma present in Christianity as taught by whites. That would have negated Gullahs' previous belief patterns and their hatred of bondage. Gullah folk Christianity was an ardently felt religion. It was a religion which elevated them above their masters' efforts to make them contented slaves. Far more than Methodism perhaps, Gullah folk religion was a religion of the heart. Their spirituality helped them channel what was expected to be hopelessness, helplessness, and prostration into the forging and further enrichment of a culture. Through individual stamina, collective faith, and cultural development they merged as a people. Their collective faith kept them spiritually free in spite of physical bondage. Their collective faith, together with spiritual freedom, and matched with natural gifts and talents, provided Gullahs with a will to create, the courage to persevere, and power, as a "prepolitical" people, to use religion as a progressive force and shield against white psychological and cultural domination. This collective faith allowed them to believe in themselves and in their dream of ultimate freedom.[71]

The year 1845 was momentous for the history of slave conversion in South Carolina and for the nation as a whole. At that time the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Southern Baptist Convention were organized. Both denominations pledged to make a more zealous thrust in Christian instruction of the black population. Also, in May of that year,

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175 South Carolina statesmen and clergy called a meeting in Charleston, inviting slaveholders either to attend or submit in writing information on the state of religious instruction among slaves on their plantations.[72] After that time, Christian conversion of bondspeople occupied a more prominent position in antebellum life and thought. It became an issue with social, economic, political, and even moral implications. What was previously viewed as a movement of questionable value soon transformed into a crusade. As the national scene became more and more polarized because of the slavery issue, it was incumbent upon Southerners, as a defense against their "national character," to see that bondspeople received some type of Christian instruction.

175 •797 Although efforts to Christianize slaves became widespread, Methodist presence in the Sea Island region receded. By the late 1840s Methodism there was more symbolic than effective. Even at the time of the Charleston Meeting, Episcopalian planters most actively solicited the services of Methodist missionaries. However, the fact remains that for nearly fifteen years Methodists were the major Christian influence among the Gullahs, planting a foundation for the growth of Christianity among slaves of the Sea Islands and coastal regions. However, the Baptist denomination, once it engaged in religious instruction, claimed the harvest of "converted" slaves.

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17 been preached for many years to our Negroes." The boast needs qualification and amplification. Certainly as far back as Whitefield and the Bryans periodic spurts of whites *preaching* to blacks occurred. Also the more recent and protracted Methodist presence in the Lowcountry is another illustration. Moreover, some slaves could occasionally take advantage of the few existing white-controlled black churches in the Savannah and Augusta, Georgia area. Most Baptist churches in the region were members of the Savannah River Baptist Association organized in 1803 by Georgia and South Carolina. In 1818 the Association divided, including only churches north of the Savannah River and within South Carolina. Jurisdiction was in the districts of Beaufort, Barnwell, and Colleton, but most member churches were concentrated in Beaufort District. By 1830 the Savannah River Association consisted of thirty-two churches. Back rows and galleries seated free blacks, as well as domestic and artisan slaves. Thus despite assurances of William Fripp, prior to 1830 the masses of slaves were not included in Baptist apostolic activity and only nominally represented in a few white congregations.[1]

175 •797 In 1831 and 1832, a short-lived but prolific Lowcountry revival occurred and reportedly stirred a number of planters in the Sea Island region to accept a religious affiliation. The effects of this "remarkable" religious awakening were most visible in Baptist congregations, and records of the Savannah River Baptist Association indicate a comparatively large membership increase in these churches. By 1831 the largest Beaufort District churches were Euhaw, Pipe Creek, Black Swamp, Beaufort, St. Helena, and May River. In 1830, just prior to the revival, the combined number of baptismal candidates for these churches was 164. Toward the end of 1831, a total of 228 baptisms were reported. In 1832 (795) Black Swamp and Pipe Creek made no reports, but the other four larger churches reported a total of 619 baptisms.[2] Considering the paucity of whites in these areas the numbers represent significant increases. Early records had no racial breakdown, but evidence indicates that some of the converts before 1831 were black.

175 567 797 Both Episcopalian and Baptist planters "smitten" during the famous 1831 revival reportedly took new interest in Christianizing their slaves. The former denomination allowed Methodist missionaries to preach and teach among bondspeople. No missionary movement for slaves was organized by the Baptists, however. And rather than allow Methodists on their plantations, most Baptist planters who favored the enterprise preferred to accept "converted" slaves into their own churches.[3]

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Even some time after 1831, general Baptist concern for the spiritual well-being of their slaves was limited. Only a small number of churches showed significant increases in church membership in about a ten-year period following the revival. This gradual progression itself was unique to older Sea Island churches. Leading Baptists stimulated to "duty" by the "revival spirit," and mindful of the currents affecting church and state nationally, attempted to generate more Christianizing activity through their influence in the Savannah River Baptist Association. In 1832 the Association formed a committee to seek funds from member churches to hire Baptist missionaries for the slaves. Since this effort was a slow process, the Association further recommended that ministers devote a certain part of their time exclusively to the slaves. The organization went on record as "feeling a deep interest for the spiritual improvement of our colored population, who have hitherto been neglected."[4]

The committee was composed of large slaveholders, many of whom were also deacons or pastors of the more prosperous churches at Beaufort, St. Helena, Black Swamp, Hilton Head, and Euhaw. These congregations had comparatively large black memberships, and the committee members were known for their "good works" in general and for the interest they took in converting their own slaves. But the resolutions expressed more of the committee's own sentiments and personal concern than a real plan of action. Baptist congregations were autonomous, and slaveholders in the Sea Island region resisted efforts of individuals in the denomination to create a Christian instruction movement. For a variety of reasons, Baptist efforts at slave conversion met with some success where it existed. But if measured in terms of church membership and frequency of exposure, such endeavors, were not extensive.[5]

About a third of South Carolina's Baptist laymen and two-fifths of the ministers were slaveholders. Baptists in the Sea Island region, the most numerous sect since 1820, counted the wealthiest and largest slaveholders among its numbers. Consequently, antislavery sentiments were never expressed there despite early debates elsewhere in the South. On the contrary, the official opinion of South Carolina Baptists was expressed in 1822 following the Vesey Conspiracy, by Richard Furman of Charleston. "Slavery," wrote Furman, "was clearly established in the Holy Scriptures by both precept and example."[6]

Nevertheless, South Carolina Baptists confronted strong abolitionist sentiment from church members in other regions. As with Methodists, the controversy dominated national meetings in the 1830s. Abolitionists'

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primary target was Baptist home and foreign missions. There antislavery elements labored to obtain official condemnation of their Southern brethren not only for slaveholding but for hypocrisy in attempting to spread Christianity domestically and abroad while ignoring their own bondspeople. Accusations prompted some prestigious Baptists to encourage more attentiveness to slave conversion. However, abolitionist recriminations also infuriated Southern congregations. Sea Island Baptists raged over the presence of abolitionist-oriented home and foreign mission "agents." They also denounced abolitionist dissemination of religious newspapers. One such newspaper, *The Christian Reflector*, which argued against a scriptural interpretation of slavery, was sent to Sea Island churches. Not all Northern Baptists were antislavery. Even some of those who were did not advocate abolition, nor propose interference with slavery. Yet the situation was perceived as threatening in the Lowcountry, and it was impossible to procure a consensus on instruction from congregations whose only tie with the regional association was voluntary. Yet, larger churches continued to scrutinize and contemplate the situation. In 1837 further proclamations were used to stir congregations into activity. The Euhaw Church representatives spoke out on the "spiritual destitution of our colored population," and urged the Association to act. The committee previously formed in 1832 had apparently met with little success, and offered three resolutions on the issue. First, emphasizing the duty of ministers to pay "especial attention" to the slaves' spiritual condition. Second, that the "Domestic Missionary" preach to slaves whenever an "opportunity may be offered him." Third, that the General Committee consider the subject and adopt measures to "best secure to our colored population spiritual instruction."[7]

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Clearly no real commitment was as yet outlined. A few individual churches were already engaging in evangelism among the slaves and attempting to persuade others. The message was one of urging a sense of responsibility, since the Savannah River Baptist Association lacked power to bind churches to a strong general policy. the Association's resources allowed them to employ one missionary, but mainly to serve whites. He ordained officers, preached at the various established churches with no regular ministers, generally superintended the constitution of new churches, and preached to "destitute" whites. Although not specifically precluded from preaching to slaves, the missionary's other extensive obligations prevented his going to plantations where he was needed or ac-

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cepted. The Association did not gain approval to hire a missionary for the bondspeople until 1839. But he encountered so much opposition that by the end of that year, he had no progress report to make and refused to continue in the position.[8] 175

Among Northern and Southern Baptist clergymen scriptural arguments over slavery were hotly debated and further hindered Baptist planters' involvement in Christianizing activity. According to planters, Northern Baptists were attempting to "procure the massacre of our wives and children" by preaching that all people of the South had a God-given right to freedom.[9] Certainly slaveholders realized that the Bible denounced bondage as well as supported it. Why else would clergymen emphasize "oral" instruction as a means of Christian instruction? Faced with the double meaning of scriptures and fearing the impact of an egalitarian interpretation of the teachings of Christ, religious instruction of the slaves remained unimpressive in the 1830s among most Baptist churches within the jurisdiction of the Savannah River Baptist Association. The Association attempted to meet the issue head on. To pave the way for a Baptist missionary enterprise, the question of the biblical sanction of slavery needed to be firmly and convincingly laid to rest. In 1841 Association ministers issued their position, hoping the resolution would be accepted as official so the work of Christian conversion could commence:

> Resolved, that the subject of slavery has been discussed until all men who seek candidly for truth must be satisfied. The whole Bible, and all history concur to settle this point, there where Christianity finds slavery existing as one of the institutions of a nation, it tolerates it, and seeks not to disturb the relation of master and servant by violence—but to infuse the spirit of love into each of these parties, and prescribes their respective duties—duties which it becomes us to perform on our part, and which, if performed, would render our slaves the happiest and most contented peasantry on earth.[10]

Thus the spirit of Christianity would inspire "love" and stimulate both master and slave to perform their "duty." For the slave, this duty entailed acceptance of a Christianity that taught meekness, subordination, docility, inferiority, and recognition of the rights of master over slave. The master was "burdened" with the "duty" or instilling these "virtues" in bondspeople to make the slaves' "happiness" and "contentment" complete. Some Baptists became reeducated to this manner of thinking, for the resolution was followed by a request from two Sea Island congrega- [197]

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tions for the services of a missionary, approved by the Association of course.

The Hilton Head Church, and Dawfuskie Church, request your body to send a missionary to preach on these islands. We want, say they, a man of piety and talents suited to our colored population. Your committee recommend that your messengers to the Sunbury Association be requested to solicit our Br. Farley R. Sweat, of Savannah to engage at once in this work, and to occupy this post. These churches have had their desires turned towards this brother, and God has so clearly intimated his will as to Br. Sweat, that your committee cannot believe he will refuse to yield himself to the call of his master. These churches will contribute liberally to the support of their missionary.[11]

Here we observe the close relationship between the Sunbury Association in Georgia and the Savannah River Association in South Carolina. The African Baptist Church was part of the Sunbury Association, and as previously discussed, South Carolina slaves sometimes joined or attended the black church in Savannah. The proximity of Hilton Head and Dawfuskie Islands to Savannah made this possible. Thus in some areas of the coast, slaves not regularly instructed by white Baptists, were exposed to the faith through members of their own race. This contact went further back than the first Baptist missionary to Hilton Head and Dawfuskie.

These two churches' requests did not stimulate a large-scale movement to hire missionaries, but other Sea Island congregations began individually to engage in spreading Christian influence among the Gullahs. Some Southern religionists and "enlightened" planters had, since the Vesey Conspiracy, been convinced that Christian inculcation of slaves was the best security for the plantation system. But when the Northern and Southern churches severed relations in 1844, such approaches were pursued in earnest. While a sense of obligation was expressed, the prominence which secular motives received in the course of the Christian conversion movement was evident at the Charleston Meeting in 1845. Notables who gathered there to champion the cause of Christianizing African-Americans specified their major concerns:

The degree of benefit apparently derived by the Negroes generally from the instruction imparted, and particularly as it regards their morals—their tempers and their conduct . . . their regard to truth—the rights of property—and their observance of the Sabbath.

The influence of this instruction upon the discipline of the plantation and the spirit and subordination of the negroes.[12]

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taught by Jesus was "the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order." This religion alone possessed the power to curb passions and to accord each group their rights: "to the laborious, the reward of their industry; to the rich, the enjoyment of their wealth; to nobles, the preservation of their honors, and to the princes, the stability of their thrones." Jesus, said Thornwell, did not teach insurrection, anarchy, bloodshed, or revolt against masters. "Christian knowledge inculcates contentment with our lot," he preached, and "renders us comparatively indifferent to the inconveniences and hardships of time." Christian knowledge, persuaded Thornwell, subdued the "passions and prejudices" responsible for endangering the "social economy."[13]

In 1848 delegates of the Savannah River Baptist Association took definitive action, making Baptists of the Sea Island region among the last to engage in the religious instruction enterprise. Even then only "two or more" missionaries were approved to go among the slaves, and money to support the preachers was solicited not guaranteed. As if planter and congregational opposition were not enough, filling missionary posts also proved a trying task. Ministers often refused to accept the charge. This reluctance can be partly explained by the lack of financial support, which is an index for gauging the degree of earnestness. Contributions were never large, generally ranging from thirty-five to fifty dollars annually, but on several occasions were as low as fifty cents. Not until 1853 did Sea Island slaves receive a missionary through the Association. Yet the cause was not totally lost. The Savannah River Baptist Association succeeded in creating interest in the Sabbath School movement for the young after 1849, and some churches as well as individual planters furthered the Baptist cause through this institution while they spurned organized efforts. Other Baptist slaveholders periodically employed their own missionary, or hired Baptist "exhorters" as overseers.[14]

Considering conditions among white Baptist churches during the antebellum era, it is not surprising that so little enthusiasm was expressed over the religious welfare of slaves. Many churches met infrequently, once a month, and shared the same pastor. Often a congregation was without a pastor for whole seasons, and the only services were provided by the Association missionary whenever he had the opportunity. This dearth of spiritual ardor was matched by internal strife in various congregations and general unruliness on the part of members. The missionary was sometimes given the task of settling disagreements which dis-

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rupted a church. He was often unsuccessful. The Savannah River Baptist Association consistently commented on the languid condition of the majority of churches in the 1830s. During the 1840s and 1850s the Association promoted Sabbath Schools not only as a means of instructing slaves, but also to combat the "declension and prevailing coldness" as well as "lack of grace" in white churches. It is surprising that slaves ever received Christian instruction considering the circumstances of Baptist churches without "grace" or filled with "paranoia" about abolitionists. Yet some planters provided plantation meetinghouses for the slaves especially after 1845. Here African-Americans met among themselves under supervision of some "trusted" black elder. Through these "invisible institutions" slaves received some Christian instruction. More significantly, they used these opportunities to interpose their own interpretations on Protestantism. Nowhere was this development more evident than in the Sea Islands. Congregations there were far ahead of their sister churches in terms of wealth, stability, leadership, and an early though gradual commitment to ostensibly integrating Gullahs into the Christian religion.[15]

Two significant events occurred in the Sea Island region in 1831. First, the presence of Methodist missionaries among the slaves. Second, the appearance of a fiery revivalist named Daniel Baker. Both happenings were determining factors in initiating a "change of heart" among Sea Island Baptists about teaching some Christian doctrines to the Gullahs.

Baptist planters of the Sea Island region laid claim to a tradition of religious dissent that began long before American independence. Some Baptist founders in the region were early disciples of George Whitefield when the established church refused to admit him to the pulpit.[16] Prominent Beaufort District Baptists of the 1830s, such as the Fripps, Fullers, Lawtons, Chaplins, and Robertses, were descendants of pioneer homeseekers, and identified with a legacy of an evangelism older than American Methodism. Given such claims to revivalist tradition and considering the apostolic dictates of the Faith, Baptist planters may well have experienced some degree of guilt and embarrassment as Methodist "knights of the saddle bags" descended upon the Sea Islands to undertake what thier spiritual brethren had neglected.

Further pressure was brought to bear in 1831 and 1832 as Beaufort District quaked under the forceful impact of a revival initiated by a cultivated and spirited evangelist. Daniel Baker was a Southern Presbyte

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rian and former pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Washington, of which both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson were members. He left the Washington Church to accept a pastorship in Savannah and there heavily engaged in evangelical preaching. The impact of Baker's sermons was reportedly felt along the entire seaboard of Georgia and South Carolina. Wherever he preached a steady stream of converts came forth. His was not a mass revival since the seaboard white population was sparse. But hundreds attended the protracted meetings which Baker conducted in "the little sea coast towns and villages" mainly inhabited by planter aristocracy. And his sermons reputedly "moved whole communities." Baker wrote in his autobiography that his South Carolina efforts led to "important results" in places such as Gillisonville, Grahamville, Robertville, May River, and Beaufort. The meetings at Beaufort he deemed "the most remarkable." There was no Presbyterian church so Baker preached alternately in the Baptist and Episcopalian churches. "Oh, what blessed meetings we had!" he wrote. Baker preached three times a day "to full houses," and the numbers "hopefully converted amounted to about eighty."[17]

In regard to the number "hopefully converted" in Beaufort, Baker apparently took only white converts into account. Another section of Baker's autobiography quotes the Episcopal minister as stating that there were "two or three hundred conversions in Beaufort under Mr. Baker's ministry," consisting of "a number of whites," seventy of whom presented themselves for confirmation at the Episcopal church, and "very many blacks," who united with the Baptists.[18] Thus at least some of the slaves from the town of Beaufort participated in the Baker revival.

At the time of Baker's appearance the two houses of worship in Beaufort were described by one of thier "eminent laymen" as "little better than masonic lodges." The churches had the form of godliness but were "destitute of its power." The "layman" observed that "frequenters of the race-course and the theater found their places at the communion table," and that not even the duelist was excluded. Baker was credited with stimulating religious enthusiasm among "decadent" members of the planter class. An observer of the 1831 revival noted that in at least one instance derision of Baker's mission was transformed into contrition. Notice of Baker's services was sent from house to house. The announcement was received at a whist club during their weekly meeting. The notice was read aloud "amidst shouts of merriment." The group ridiculed the reli-

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in the Sea Island District inspired more attention toward the spiritual welfare of the Gullahs.

Daniel Baker's conversion of Richard Fuller in 1831 had significant implications for Christianizing efforts in the Sea Islands. Under Fuller's ministration the Beaufort Church became the largest, most influential congregation in the Sea Island region. Fuller was greatly moved by the reformer's cry to instruct the slaves and was largely responsible for the comparatively phenomenal growth of the Beaufort Baptist Church.[23]

Richard Fuller was a member of the Fuller-Middleton family, long-time residents of Beaufort District. Fuller's personal holdings consisted of plantations on St. Helena and Cat Islands as well as the mainland. At the time of Baker's appearance in Beaufort, Fuller was a wealthy, well-established, Harvard-educated attorney not yet thirty years old. His parents were Baptists, but at birth Fuller was baptized an Episcopalian. Following his "moving" conversion in 1831, Fuller was rebaptized and he united with the local Episcopal church. But, not finding the "peace of mind" nor the "inspiration" he sought, Fuller was baptized again, this time in the Beaufort River, and as a Baptist. As further evidence of his reformation, Fuller immediately relinquished his lucrative law practice and declared himself called to the gospel ministry. In 1832 he was ordained a Baptist minister and accepted pastorship of Beaufort Church, where he remained until 1847. He then accepted a call to the Seventh Street Baptist Church in Baltimore where he was pastor until 1871.[24]

Late in his career, Fuller confided to a friend that when he was initially "called" to the ministry he resolved to confine his labors wholly to the slave population. But, Fuller claimed, he "was prevented by the hand of God." Although he did not devote his entire career to religious instruction of bondspeople, as a minister in Beaufort Fuller spent much of his time to preaching among the Gullahs. The attention and interest he gave represented a turning point in the religious history of Sea Island blacks. The immense African-American population, previously ignored by Baptist planters and churches, gradually, under the administration of Fuller, became objects of concern from a spiritual standpoint. As white membership increased, slaves of these new members were baptized and the Beaufort Church became a training ground for black Baptist converts at liberty to attend services. Fuller insisted that galleries be given over to the bulging black membership. A special lecture room was also added where black church members could be instructed before and after Sun-

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day worship as well as during the week. Slaves attending Beaufort Church were sometimes instructed by their own masters who were also prominent church elders. Aside from scripture, church discipline and rules of conduct were emphasized.[25]

As a Sea Island planter and a favorite son of the community, Fuller could combat some resistance to religious instruction of the slaves. By 1840 he had organized a system of preaching places on the Islands where he or a member of his staff made periodic appearances. Establishment of these preaching stations furthered the Baptist cause, leading to "conversion" of many plantation slaves. While pastor of Beaufort Church, Fuller was respected among the whites as a sincere, inspiring, and effective minister. He was also popular with the Gullahs. Fuller was one of the very few planters who openly denounced the separation of families. He considered this morally wrong and against biblical law. He refused to sell or divide his bondspeople, an important consideration to black people accustomed to seeing "pious" planters disregard slaves' familial ties at a moment's notice. In addition to observing (like a true patriarch) this fundamental principle of humanity, Fuller adopted an evangelical style of preaching said to be filled with "earnestness, fire and melting pathos." An associate who often heard Fuller preach wrote:

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> His whole mien was imposing. When he rose to address a congregation, his very attitude was that of a man conscious at once that he had a most important message to deliver, and that he had the capacity to deliver it worthily. . . . His voice was singularly sweet and of great compassion and managed with such exquisite skill, that his softest whispers were distinctly heard in the remotest parts of a crowded congregation; while his loudest tones did not jar upon the ears of those nearest the speaker. His gestures were always graceful. . . . He subdued others, because, in the loftiest flights of his imagination and the deepest feelings of his heart, he was master of himself.[26]

Apparently a skillful and arousing speaker, Fuller captured the imagination of the bondspeople, something few white preachers could do. The Gullahs also viewed him as a kind and sensitive man whose "good works" were equal to his "faith." No doubt these considerations explain the eagerness with which he was received and accepted by the Gullahs as a preacher and for the warmth with which they remembered him to the Northern missionaries during the course of the Civil War. The Gullahs even created a stanza for Fuller in one of their most revered spirituals: "Massa Fuller on de Tree ob Life, Roll, Jordan, Roll."

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After Fuller left for Baltimore in 1847, attempts to bring slaves into Sea Island churches were not persued with the same enthusiasm. But in 1853, through efforts of the Savannah River Baptist Association missionary and an energetic new pastor at Beaufort Church named I.M.C. Beaker, Gullahs again became a focal point of concern. During the last seven antebellum years, slave baptisms in the Beaufort River again became frequent. A record was set in 1857 when 220 slaves received into the Church "were all on Sunday morning . . . Baptized by our Pastor . . . in 1 hour and 45 minutes and in the presence of a very large number of spectators." The total number of slaves baptized for that year was also a record—556.[27]

The first phase of Baptist efforts to Christianize slaves, from 1830 to 1845, roughly corresponds to a period of growth in Sea Island churches and, most spectacularly, the Beaufort Church. In 1833, Beaufort District had a slave population of around 30,861. For that year the nine largest Beaufort District Baptist congregations reported a total membership of around 4,419. That was over two and one-half times the total membership of the remaining twenty-eight Baptist churches in the Savannah River Association (whose combined memberships was only 1,666). We cannot be certain about the number of slaves these figures represent, since racial designations were not yet in use. But the majority of these church members were slaves, a hypothesis supported by membership returns of later years for which there are racial designations.[28]

By 1845, when the Southern Baptist Convention was organized, the largest Beaufort District Baptist churches at Beaufort, St. Helena, May River and Hilton Head for instance, reported a total membership of around 5,914. Most of this increase is attributable to slave baptisms and over half of those to Beaufort Church. Total membership for all forty-three churches within the Association was about 8,529. This trend indicates that the most active area of religious instruction was in the Sea Islands. St. Helena Parish, with a slave population of 6,740 in 1845, had two Baptist churches. While St. Helena's Brick Baptist Church was accessible to the several thousand slaves living there, Beaufort Church drew its membership for a forty-mile radius that included six Sea Islands and parts of the mainland. The adult slave population in Beaufort District was around 22,000 in 1840, out of a total slave population of 29,682.[29] Thus approximately one in every five slaves in Beaufort District was a Baptist church member.

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In the latter and generally most vigorous period of the movement for Christian instruction from 1845 to 1861, Baptist involvement continued to center in areas where evangelizing efforts were already in progress, such as the Sea Islands. Although several Lowcountry churches did increase their black membership during the period, such augmentation was numerically insignificant. Most membership returns submitted to the Savannah River Baptist Association had racial designations by 1848. These reports indicate that a few individual Sea Island churches maintained fairly large memberships and Beaufort Church had unusual increases. But the majority of Baptist churches in the Lowcountry south of Charleston seemed to fall short of the goal of religious conversion of bondspeople. Actually neither Sea Island Baptists, Baptist missionaries, nor lukewarm Baptist churches adequately "served the spiritual needs" of so large a black population. In 1859, as civil conflict approached, the total black membership of the Baptist churches within the jurisdiction of the Savannah River Baptist Association was not yet 7,000.[30] In some ways these figures are unimpressive, but they nevertheless demonstrate black exposure to Christianity through Baptist efforts. We can also surmise that black church members were the best conduits of the faith in the slave quarters. When this is considered, Baptist influence is even more manifest, for few Gullahs actually joined the Methodist church. Most Gullahs "converted to Christianity" or even adherents of it accepted the denomination of their masters, a preference that continued even after bondage. This raises questions about the nature of Baptist activity among the Gullahs, and why the denomination of slaveholders so strongly appealed to slaves.

Superficially, Lowcountry planters appear to represent "paternalism" par excellence. Those "young and refined" citizens of the Sea Island communities who claimed Daniel Baker for their spiritual patron included such men as C. C. Pinckney, William H. Barnwell, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Stephen Elliott, and Richard Fuller. These men represented the quintessence of South Carolina Lowcountry aristocracy, dominating landholdings and counting their slaves by the hundreds. Beaufort was the chief place of residence for most Baptist planters. But some of the stauncher Baptists such as the Lawtons, Robertses, Bosticks, and Nortons shunned "iniquitous" recreations offered by the Sea Island resort town and created their own manorial splendor at Robertville, Lawtonville, and Gillisonville. These planters reportedly excelled in erudition

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while he found nothing explicit to support slavery in the New Testament, Fuller maintained that this silence was tacit approval. "What God sanctioned in the Old Testament and permitted in the New," Fuller proclaimed, "cannot be a sin."[35]

Also, despite Richard Fuller's "professed" views against slavery, he maintained his plantations after leaving Beaufort for Baltimore. During the Civil War he was loyal and remained in Baltimore. Following the outbreak of the war he went to Washington, D. C., and called upon Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, to inquire about his rights "in regard to his plantations and slaves in Port Royal." Chase wrote:

> Told him that, as a loyal man, he was Proprietor of the land. "How about the Negroes?" he asked. "They were free," I replied. He thought his right to them was the same as his right to the land. Told him opinion would differ on that point, and that, for one, I should never consent to the involuntary reduction to slavery of one of the Negroes who had been in the service of the Government. Told him further what I thought of the character of the rebellion and its results, etc.

The conversation concluded with Fuller indicating his willingness "to acquiesce in the experiments of the Government," but having "grave doubts" about the ability of the Gullahs to behave responsibly as free people. Fuller quoted Machiavelli's saying, "Next to making free men slaves, it is most difficult to make slaves free men."[36]

Richard Fuller may have been antislavery in "principle" and in theory. But in reality he upheld American slavery as a white man's right. Yet, while his theoretical position on slavery was ambiguous, he was unwavering in efforts to expose the black population in St. Helena Parish to Christianity and in his support of such endeavors all over the state.

At a glance, it appears that during the apex of the antebellum era, Sea Island Baptists combined the qualities of material wealth and an exhibition of missionary zeal. The small white memberships and disproportionately large black galleries ostensibly imply that in the wake of paranoia about abolitionists and general inertia among most Lowcountry churches, Sea Island Baptist planters were exemplary in Christianizing slaves. Yet to what extent did Sea Island Baptist planters actually further the cause of Christianity among the Gullahs? And, insofar as they did, were such teachings instituted out of an acknowledgment of Christian duty? Without denying the individual motivation and limited sense of moral obligation expressed by one such as Richard Fuller, Baptist con-

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cern for religious instruction was mainly superficial. Possibly some wished to ease a sense of conscience aroused by the 1831 revival and to neutralize criticism from Northern quarters. But more significantly, Baptist interest in Christianizing the Gullahs was prominent where doctrine might be a means of exerting influence over personal behavior and social relationships to further the existing status quo.

"Christian" Slaves

Mostly town slaves and house servants were first accepted into Baptist churches. Certainly, in the early phase of the movement, these African-Americans had access to the "privilege" of becoming church members. Since Beaufort was the chief place of residence for Sea Island planters, their retinue of house servants had the opportunity, and sometimes were forced to attend Baptist worship. As church membership increased, the next group of slaves in plantation hierarchy, the artisans, were also represented. Field workers were not completely excluded from the churches, especially Beaufort Church. When a slaveholder and his family joined a church, his slaves might be required to join as well. Richard Fuller, for instance, was diligent about accepting his slaves into Beaufort Church and encouraged this among his slaveholding neighbors. Yet few Sea Island Baptists allowed their field slaves the mobility needed to attend preaching places. This rule must have applied particularly to slaves wishing to attend church service in places like Beaufort or Bluffton that necessitated leaving the Islands or vicinity of the plantations for long periods of time and usually required some means of water transportation provided by the planter. Furthermore, these country churches were modest-sized structures, built mainly with the small white population in mind. Not all churches even had galleries. Among those that did, once the more "privileged" slaves and house servants were seated, there was obviously no room for the field hands. According to one former Beaufort slave:

> Didn't have no colored churches. De drivers and de overseers, de house-servants, de bricklayers and folks like dat'd go to de white folk's church. But not de field hands. Why dey couldn't have all got in de church. My marsa had threg or four hundred slaves, himself. And most of the other white folks had just as many and more.

Even with favored slaves, concepts of white spiritual egalitarianism did not go far. Beaufort whites insisted in 1841 that the inside stairs leading

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to the slave galleries be moved to the outside so that the two races would not have to pass each other, or use the same entrance when they met to worship God in common.[37] One can thus imagine the disdain that "gentle" white folk felt at being in close quarters with field slaves.

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Some whites considered it a dangerous practice to allow slaves to leave plantations to attend church no matter what their status. Thomas Fuller, Episcopalian brother of the venerable Richard, reported on the state of religious instruction at the Charleston Meeting. Fuller complained that the habit of black church members descending upon the town of Beaufort was deplorable:

> Removed as so large a number are, every Sunday from the control and discipline of the plantation, and impossible as it is for the Church to know and control their conduct, they use their liberty in ways and for purposes adverse to their morals. Nothing seems to me more essential in order to their becoming a religious people, than that they be subjected to the supervision of the plantation, of the minister of a Church, that will investigate and correct their wrong views and bad habits. . . . It is owing, I think, to the want of religious instruction and discipline on the plantations, that the influence of religious instruction and the spirit of subordination among the negroes is so little seen and felt.[38]

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Baptist planters themselves recognized and attempted to confront these problems. As church memberships increased, a means of superintending the widespread congregation and keeping slaves on the plantations was needed. Black church members were organized into plantation associations under the jurisdiction of the church.

These "black societies" were the nucleus of the Gullah socioreligious community. They existed even before preaching stations were established and were reportedly religious bodies which slaves entered into voluntarily, although the nature and origin of these societies was unknown. Methodist missionaries found them already organized and a hindrance to Methodist authority among the slaves, especially when their practices were under the rubric of Christianity. In 1833, John Field, a St. Helena planter, wrote to the Methodist missionary assigned to the island. Speaking for himself and "others," Field expressed his disapproval of the societies, and of the slaves' association with the Baptist Church on St. Helena. According to Field, the slaves who joined the church were "almost entirely under the control of Negro leaders." The Methodist missionary's preaching on the island prompted "constant ap-

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plication" of slaves for "tickets to get baptized," and join the Baptist Church. The slaves derived no Christian benefit from their association with the church, said Field, but used it as "a place of resort." Field "suspected an influence decidedly contrary to vital godliness," but added that it could not be prevented "unless I resided on the place myself."[39]

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If the benne seed ritual is an example,[40] these societies had some characteristics similar to African associations. It is later argued that the black societies were, like the African societies, units of organization that regulated conduct and served to integrate individuals into the plantation community. Within these societies Gullahs practiced their own version of Christianity, and created their religious folk-culture. Baptist planters apparently intended to alter the "corrupt" elements within these slave associations and use them to promote a Christianity, suitable to their own ends. Slaves' familiarity with concepts of secret society, membership, and social regulations suggest a relationship to African institutions that Christian ideas of a community of believers reinforced. Like the formation of Gullah language, the syncretic evolution of African Christianity was a gradual process. It began when diverse African groups framed a spiritual commonality and belief system into which Christianity, at various times and with varied intensity, was incorporated, reformulated and appropriated. For many years, Gullahs heard of "Christianity" mainly from black rather than white teachers, and this contributed to the persistence of African norms, thought, and ceremony. But, as the benne seed ritual suggests, the presence of black "Christians" in the slave quarters undoubtedly produced debates, challenges, acknowledgments and selective adaptation even before 1830.

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While Methodist missionaries were "suspicious" of the black societies, for Baptists they were a medium for religious service and discipline among the slaves. Thus the black societies served one function for slaves and embodied another for slave owners. At Beaufort and other churches, slaves professing conversion as Baptists had to unite with a society. Beaufort Church, with its large black membership and extensive records, illustrates how whites expected these societies to function. At first black leaders had charge of the societies, but subject to the superintendence of a resident planter. The black leaders reported at the monthly church meeting. According to the Minutes of Beaufort Church for November 11, 1840:

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The Committee on discipline are requested to obtain if possible the presence of all the colored elders, at their meetings; as from them and them alone [the elders] must they expect to receive legitimate reports, of Deaths, the prosperity of their societies or backsliding members.[41]

When societies first came under jurisdiction of the Church each one bore the name of their black leader in charge. But by 1850 societies were under governance of a white brother living on the island and the organizations named after their locations. Rather than attend the white church, the black membership was directly affiliated with black societies for purposes of "religious instruction and worship."[42] Thus, black societies were the vehicle through which the Gullahs as Baptists participated in the Christian experience.

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Although white brethren ultimately were ostensible leaders of black societies, the structure and supervision of the organizations still provided the slaves with some autonomy. Ideally the white brother in charge of a given society held monthly meetings with society members, scrutinized the slaves' activities, conducted religious exercises, and examined candidates for church membership. Each white brethren was assisted by one or more blacks (depending upon the size of the society) called "watchmen," "elders," or "deacons," appointed by the church at the suggestion of the "brother in charge." In reality, however, the black deacon continued to direct the society. He was responsible for "general watchcare" over the society, and conducted society meetings "to inquire into and report . . . cases for discipline that may come to his attention." He was also at liberty "to hold meetings for worship and exhortation . . . on such plantations as he may have received special permission," and to administer communion. The black elder was in turn aided by "help" on each plantation with a sufficient number of society members. The help supervised members on the plantation, held prayer meetings, and reported weekly to the elder, naming those slaves desiring to join the society. According to a former Sea Island slave, a black exhorter would preach "to de field hands down in de quarters. . . . Meet next day to de Marsa's and turn in de report, how many pray, how many ready for baptism and all like dat."[43]

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Gullahs had a measure of control in terms of internal structure and worship within black societies. How they transferred that into community cohesion is discussed later. Planters primarily wanted plantation discipline preached, breaches of discipline punished, and corrective retri-

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bution administered in the name of Christian commandments. Beyond that superintendence, slaveholders spent little energy on Christian doctrine. Planters probably welcomed opportunities to provide slaves with a "safe" outlet for releasing pent-up hostilities and emotions. After 1845, many plantations had rude structures where the Gullahs could "hold prays" on weekday evenings as well as Sundays. Northern missionaries were appalled at the condition of the "Prays" or Praise Houses. "The owner furnished a better stable for his horses than a house of worship for these sons and daughters of the King of Kings," wrote Mansfield French from Port Royal.[44] Yet for Gullahs the Praise House was a plantation community hall where they related secular experiences, directed their religious life, openly expressed among each other their innermost frustrations, longings and expectations.

The white brother in charge of a society was generally a large slaveholder sometimes with several plantations on the Island he superintended. In other cases a Baptist overseer, but slaveholder in his own right, was assigned to a society. The names of Fripp, Chaplin, Barnwell, Baynard, and Fuller dominate Beaufort Church Minutes as "brethren in charge" of black societies. Most of these planters rarely spent long periods of time on their island plantations, preferring the comforts of their Beaufort townhouses. Most knew little about their slaves' activities (except house slaves) unless some depredation was committed and reported. In the early period of church superintendence of societies, white brethren were lax about meeting with the organizations, often leaving this responsibility with the black elders. In 1842 the Beaufort Church Business reminded white brethren of their duties:

> Resolved . . . that *Brother Chaplin be requested to attend himself in person as the Church deems it important that the Brethren appointed and responsible be themselves instructors of the societies confided to them.*

The Church had difficulty retaining a white brother in charge and resignations were frequent. Most Baptists apparently did not want the responsibility of overseeing black church members.[45]

Thus, black societies primarily accommodated the slave membership of large Baptist churches with little or no Christian instruction being imparted by white society leaders. The other sources of exposure to white Christian teachings came from Methodist missionaries, from preaching places established by Richard Fuller (though supplied less rigorously after

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a slaveholder was a "sin" in the eyes of God. This outlook was pressed on children who, after 1845, sometimes received instruction on Sunday mornings in the form of oral catechism, recitation of the Ten Commandments, and prayers. Rebecca Grant recalled that in Beaufort her former owners "wouldn't miss de catechism," and they [the children], "was taught they must be faithful to the Missus and Marsa's work like you would to your heavenly Father's work." Slaves on St. Helena Island discussed "Good Billy" (William) Fripp, a Baptist master who was referred to as "good," not because of his benevolence toward his slaves, but for his avowed piety and strict sense of biblical discipline. According to the Gullahs this "leading Baptist" carried his Bible out to the fields, showed slaves "Moses' law," and then flogged them "accordin'."[53]

Baptist slaveholders applied selected scriptures to the Gullahs' daily life struggle. Planters hoped a general spirit of contrition, via a "fear of God," would prevail in the slave quarters and subvert independent thought and action. They viewed discipline meetings as having a purgative effect on the Gullahs and defeating their efforts to resist the most degrading aspects of bondage. Double jeopardy existed for these black church members. If discovered committing acts against slaveholding interests, they suffered bodily punishment. But worse perhaps was expulsion from black society, the Gullahs' primary source for freedom of expression. An excommunicated or suspended church member would receive no pass to attend a preaching place or "society" or be allowed to "hold prays." Slaveholders tried using Christianity to exercise psychological dominance over the minds of Gullahs as they employed brute force to maintain physical control. No other spiritual activity detracted from or competed with these religious tribunals. When they occurred, plantation authority insisted on the slaves' undivided attention. From the Beaufort Church Minutes we find that even the Methodist missionary's limited activities had to revolve around these assemblages:

> The Pastor to write to the Rev. Mr. Moore [Methodist Missionary] and request him to appoint any other Sabbath than the first in the month to preach on Ladies Island—as that is the day appointed for the discipline of that Society attached to this Church.[54]

White Baptists' use of church discipline to undermine the Gullahs' active indignation and struggle against bondage is evident when considering the nature of the "sins" of which black church members were found

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and though they stand about for hours in the sun, we have never missed the slightest thing."[56]

In the benne seed ritual, Gullahs dealt with theft in a spiritual context, under the guise of the Baptist faith. But the moral judgment was the opposite of Christianity. "Sin" was not upon the slave who stole from the master, but the individual who "divulged" the act. Gullahs possessed a keen sense of communal morality which, in this regard, was not subverted by dogmatic features of Christianity. While stealing from "Maussa," was a sin, it was wrong—that is, against elements of collective interests and values—to steal from a fellow slave and hence betray community confidence. Gullahs extended their moral philosophy further than race or condition however, by refusing to steal from whites simply because they were white. But, the Gullahs were not naive. Their shrewd analysis of justice helped them distinguish between friend and oppressor even among white Northern "missionaries." And some white Northern Baptist ministers sent to the Sea Islands during the Port Royal experiment were more avaricious than cotton agents. One Reverend Phillips, on full salary from a missionary organization, also drew a salary from the government as a superintendant of plantations, and was provided with "house-rent and rations." Still, Phillips "demanded," from St. Helena Island Gullahs, "half-a-dollar from every church member for the half year ending January 1." Since some one thousand blacks on St. Helena, claimed membership in Brick Baptist Church, Phillips expected to collect quite a sum. But the Gullahs refused to pay. Other ministers "of like kidney" were dismissed for "lying" and for "stealing" contributions sent to the Gullahs by Northern congregations. On one occasion, Gullahs discovered that James McCrea, a minister representing the American Missionary Association was cheating them. They refused to attend McCrea's religious meetings and refused to labor in the cotton fields he supervised. Likewise, when some government cotton agents on St. Helena charged over 100 percent more for store items than was being charged in Beaufort, these stores were broken into "and robbed of a good deal of clothing."[57]

Flight, another problem continually plaguing Sea Island slaveholders and punished by both church and state, was usually provoked by some extreme act of cruelty, or gross injustice. Sometimes slaves left because of a strong desire to visit a loved one. Gullahs rarely ran away with intentions of "going North" for instance. Aside from the near impossi-

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appointment," wrote Botume. "Sometimes two men claimed the same woman, whilst she coquetted not a little, evidently disposed to take the one that bid the highest." But, Botume added that this "rarely if ever" occurred when children were involved.[74]

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Although the Committee on Discipline within Baptist churches operated as a religious tribunal, efforts to use Christianity to control the Gullahs was largely unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Gullahs seemed almost unanimously to prefer religious affiliation through Baptist membership rather than Methodist. Methodist missionaries displayed a more sincere and human interest in the slaves than their sometimes ruthless, Puritan-oriented Baptist masters. "This seems to be a very unpromising portion of our field of labor," wrote one Methodist missionary, "all owing to the prejudices of the negroes." He continued:

> We cannot . . . find fault with the negroes in this portion of our mission field, for preferring another communion to our own; but our voice will ever be lifted against them, for refusing the bread of life, because, forsooth it comes not to them on a silver salver, or from the hands of one who has not "gone down into or come up out of the water."[75]

The cermonious manner in which Baptists initiated converts into church fellowship impressed the Gullahs. Also, despite Calvinist orientation, Baptists were nonheirarchial, worship was less formal, and church structure less legalistic. But, such considerations were not as significant in influencing Gullah acceptance of the Baptist denomination as were other factors. Baptists slaves exercised a religious autonomy the Methodists would not hear of, and this, coupled with the fact that Sea Island slavery was a quasi-absentee type, contributed to the Gullahs' opportunity to control their own religion, to a point. Moreover, in their endeavor to keep blacks under civil control and to keep them on the plantations, slaveholders allowed spiritual permissiveness by legitimizing already existing black societies and leaving them in the hands of black leaders with only minimal white supervision.[76]

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The extent to which spiritual autonomy influenced Gullah culture and social organization is most evident in the prominence of black leadership. Baptist planters recommended black watchmen who were supposedly "tried and true," and slaveholders apparently had great confidence in those chosen. Such elders were usually staunch church members, but also influential and respected in the quarters. Methodist missionaries were skep-

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tical about employing blacks even as helpers. William Capers insisted that "helpers" only be "a feeble staff—not leaned upon. They can no more do the missionary's work than a staff can walk." On the other hand, Sea Island Baptists placed much Christian teaching on the shoulders of black leaders. Methodists were consistently confronted with the problems created by this difference in tactical approach. After 1845 most black elders operated with the approval of slaveholders. Some, according to Methodists, had rudimentary knowledge of Christianity. But most, said the missionaries, represented "the very essence of ignorance and superstition." Some slaves came to Methodists' preaching and "precious seasons" and "effusions of tears would ensue." But Methodists lamented that slaves immediately deserted them for "one of their own":

> Let it be known that one of these [slaves] is to preach on such a day and there is such a rush . . . that they may have the pleasure of hearing one of their own color . . . what else than mischief can be expected from the teaching of an ignorant enthusiast who knows nothing of God's word, and puts his own delusions in the place of divine truth? . . . and they say that whenever they come to hear me, it is from duty . . . because I am employed by their owners."

Wherever Baptists authorized Christian instruction, Methodists found black leaders and black societies. "The society exerts its influence against us which is remarkably strong," wrote the missionary at Pocotaligo in 1844. "This 'society' is altogether in the hands of the colored people who are actively engaged against us." Thus black leaders struggled to maintain their position among their people and continued preaching and practicing their own version of "Christianity." Methodists hoped the establishment of missions would fragment the influence of black teachers and thus foster the cause of "true" religion. A lengthy editorial was printed in the *Southern Christian Advocate* in 1846 where the author discussed the "deplorable exhibition of pseudo religion" among slaves of the large plantations in coastal South Carolina:

> The superstitious notions prevalent here and there, are probably the reflects of—more ancient superstitions, handed down by tradition and propagated by so called *leaders*, who prior to the preaching of the gospel by . . . the missionaries . . . wielded a fearful amount of spiritual influence among their followers, and the negro communities of the plantations generally. And it is what with remarkable tenacity these superstitious actions still maintain their hold in spite of a better teaching. Instead of giving up their visionary religionism, embracing the simple truth . . . our missionaries find them endeavoring to incorporate their

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superstitious rites with a purer system of instruction, producing thereby a hybrid, crude, and undefinable medley of truth and falsehood.[78]

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Many missionaries saw slave children as the future of the enterprise. Others were even skeptical about that. According to one Methodist, "so far does prejudice extend, even the children on some of these places refuse to be instructed, because of the example of their parents and the older ones." Many Baptist planters left instruction of the young in the hands of plantation "help" who taught the children prayers and whatever else their religious instruction consisted of. Gradually, Methodists were forced to admit that despite their consistent though infrequent preaching and catechizing, they could not successfully compete with black leadership operating clandestinely or with the approval of Baptist churches and slaveholders.[79]

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The Episcopalian mission established in 1849 on the Sea Isalands took away the near monopoly that Methodist missionaries previously had among a number of Episcopalian planters. Episcopalian slaveholders observed the same uninterested attitude among the slaves as Methodists witnessed. John Edwin Fripp, a St. Helena Episcopalian, allowed his slaves to attend the preaching of a diocese missionary while Fripp himself was in residence on the plantation. But given a choice, few showed up to hear "Mr. Welch" when the minister was on the plantation. According to Fripp's Journal:

> Sat. Dec. 19th—Rev. Welch is down tonight lecturing to the Negroes. Will go to Seabrooks in the Morning. The Negroes appear very backward in coming to hear him. They are getting tired of religion I expect.

No doubt "religion" was not what tired Fripp's slaves, but the dry "lecturing" wliich often characterized missionary sermons. Gullahs realized that plauters were not truly concerned with their spiritual welfare and the they recognized the one-sidedness of their situation. An old coachman on the same Fripp plantation stated "massa been unjust to we. Take all we labor and get rich, then say we lazy, Can't care for we self, give us two suits a year, dat our wages."[80] No one need wonder about the degree of enthusiasm Gullahs had for the religious emissary of such masters.

Thus, a key to understanding the appeal of the Baptist faith for Gullahs lies in recognizing the slaves' rationale. Methodist emphasis on order and hierarchy left little room for internal flexibility in the denomina-

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tional structure. Baptists on the other hand had separate congregations, loosely bound together. Baptists sanctioned black associations that were relatively independent of the church and largely dominated by the slaves themselves. In some cases Baptists even provided Gullahs with a place to hold society and "prays" meetings among themselves, however humble such places were. Moreover, Baptist planters authorized religious leaders from the quarters with whom the Gullahs readily identified. Not surprisingly then, to the extent that Gullahs adopted Christianity, they considered themselves Baptists. The Baptist faith became the Gullahs' own personal religion, one they molded and fashioned away the watchful, critical eyes of the forces of spiritual "superiority" and physical exploitation.

Why did the Baptist slaveholders permit this flexibility and modicum of freedom to their slaves? The answer probably lies with the slaveholders' capacity for self-deception and belief in the power of their ability to dominate (for which as a class they are well known). Thus they were confident that black leaders' presentation of Christianity would not jeopardize plantation interests. In keeping with the merging Southern religious vogue of the time, slaveholders ultimately believed in the soothing effects of Christianity on a slave population's mentality. Furthermore, a limited degree of personal commitment had an effect on some slaveholders' attitude toward Christian instruction. For if "duty" and Christian instruction harmonized in bringing more order and discipline to the plantation, clearly nothing was at risk. The primary reason for Baptist involvement with Christian instruction was its potential for perpetuating power and cultural ascendancy over the slaves, to maintain the "Southern way of life" for the dominant class. The Gullahs, however, perceived the situation differently.

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him for many years insisted that his "wisdom" and "vision" were "God's free gift" for a service of faith and hope that "Prophet" Polite had rendered his people. In old age, as a free man, he addressed the Praise House congregation probably the same way he did on other occasions throughout the years after slavery. The words of Sam Polite demonstrates that the Gullahs, in freedom as in bondage, viewed their religion as a special gift with a unique essence:

> God done gib de white folks a heap of things, but he ain't forgotten us 'cause He gib us Religion and we have a right to show it out to all de world. De Buckra [white people], deys got de knowing of the whys and hows of religion, but dey ain't never got de feel of it yet. I think God ain't have much respect for no kind of religion without de feeling. De Book say, 'They that worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth.' There might be some truth in deys-all religion, but there ain't much spirit in a religion that's all in de head.[1]

The Gullahs' capacity to maintain psychological and spiritual autonomy in the face of degrading implications of their historical circumstances was usually attributed to their faith. The ostensible basis of this faith was Christianity. Certainly one source of Gullah religion and spirituality is found in Christian example, enabling them to see their enslavement in heroic terms. Yet Gullah roots sprang from an African world view that emphasized affirmation and celebration of human life, with religion representing the highest expression of that existence. Additionally, their African heritage familiarized Gullahs with the power and supremacy of a collective spirit over individual experience. Thus, while planters valued religious instruction as a means of manipulating the actions and thinking of Gullahs, the slaves' discretionary adoption and adaptation of certain features of Christianity was a way of articulating and manifesting their common oppression in terms significant for them and also either acceptable or esoteric to slaveholders and missionaries.

Most Gullahs cared little about didactic features fundamental to Christianity. And while their exposure to the religion was primarily superficial, their acceptance and reinterpretation was essentially practical, reinforcing older traditions. Their limited understanding of Protestantism was observed by antebellum travelers and Methodist missionaries right up to the time of civil conflict. Aptitude had nothing to do with the Gullahs' failure to grasp a firmer knowledge of Protestantism. They shrewdly did what was expected of them without actually internalizing

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doctrine. When given the opportunity, they fashioned their own religion. For instance, slaves in the wealthy coastal parish on the Waccamaw peninsula had the atypical experience of receiving, from about 1835 to 1861, very concerted Christian instruction. The rector of All Saints Episcopal Church at Waccamaw was Alexander Glennie of England, who, with several assistants, spent thirty-three years preaching and teaching bondspeople on numerous plantations. Glennie's parish and church were showplaces of the Carolina Coast whenever planters and Southern clergymen wanted to demonstrate how fully they were meeting the spiritual needs of their "people." Glennie himself published a popular book of sermons designed especially for slaves. Hundreds of Gullahs were communicants at All Saints, and "thousands of colored children recited the catechism, intelligently." Observers were impressed with Glennie's effectiveness:

> He has been with them so long and is such an amiable kind man that the negroes love him very much and his example has as much influence over them as his preaching. We all went to the negro church one P.M. . . . the congregation responsed and sang the Te Deum with Mr. G. . . . . When he preached he would go on a while, then stop and ask them questions about what he had gone over and they answered very well.

Yet after the Civil War, returning residents witnessed what they termed "religious deterioration" among the former slaves:

> Chapels were taken over by the negroes and soon resounded with barbaric shouting, the accompaniment of the debased Christianity of the emancipated slave. . . . They have forsaken the way which they had learned, and taken to themselves teachers of their own color. Fanaticism and extravagance rule in their assemblies. . . . There are indications of a return to African barbarism.[2]

During the Yankee occupation, representatives of the American Missionary Association noted that Gullahs were a "religious people," easily inspired to sing and pray profusely. Jesus was "a common theme in their conversation." But observers also noted that Gullahs knew little of "practical religion." Northern teachers commented on how quickly Gullah children memorized their school lessons. Yet the children's knowledge of religion was strangely confused with the current events in which they were caught up. One teacher, after "plainly" explaining to a Sunday School class of large boys the origin of the Ten Commandments and

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how they were given to Moses, then asked the children who wrote the Ten Commandments. She received such answers as "Uncle Sam," "General Saxby" (referring to General Rufus Saxton, Commander of the Department of the South), and "Columbus." On another occasion, a group of students were quizzed by officers in General Sherman's army. The question "Children, who is Jesus Christ?" was at first received with "paralyzed silence." Finally, a small boy loudly ventured, "General Saxby sar." An older boy responsed by giving his classmate "a vigorous thrust in the back" and proclaiming, 'Not so, boy! Him's Massa Linkum."[3] So much for the effectiveness of Methodist catechism and Baptist Sunday School.

Yet the children were heard singing of Jesus constantly. Even at school children consistently sang such "spirituals" as the following:

Patrol around me. Tank God he no ketch me
O Lord, yes my Lord
.....
In de mornin' when I rise,
Tell my Jesus Huddy oh, . . .
.....
I would not let you go, my Lord,
I would not let you go,
.....
I can't stay behin' my Lord,
I can't stay behin'[4]

Even adult knowledge of Christianity was severly limited despite their attraction to "things of the spirit." One example was their attitude toward Christmas. Although the Gullahs revered Jesus, few understood the significance of Christmas, the day of Christ's birth. Still it was a joyous season, viewed in slavery primarily as a rare occasion, when fresh meat was allocated, labor ceased for two or three days, and possibly a new suit of clothing was received. Mary Ames taught among the Gullahs on Edisto and Wadmalaw Islands where Methodism was reportedly particularly effective. Yet Ames expressed surprise that the people knew so little of the life of Christ, "not knowing even of his birth." But, she related, "they are all familiar with his sayings." Elizabeth Botume, a Hilton Head teacher, remembered one jubilant Christmastime among the Sea Island "Contrabands," when she was asked to preach:

I replied that there was but one sermon fitting for the occasion, and I read the whole of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, first explaining to them the meaning of

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completes the process of joining the Church and Praise House. According to Patricia Guthrie who did field work in the Sea Islands, "entrance into the religious and the politico-jural domains parallels the time when plantation membership becomes fully realized," or when a person "catches sense." Joining the Praise House formally expressed this initiation into the plantation domain. An individual was no longer merely a member of a household but a citizen of the plantation community, and a member of the Church. Thus personhood was attained through "catching sense." All members had to answer to the religious court system when discord arose. The Praise House law was considered the "just law," and when disputes arose, settlement was reached in the religious court. Praise House membership demanded that all grievances go before this "Committee." The "unjust law" was essentially white law.[6] This raises questions about how plantation membership functioned before widespread Christian teaching by whites, and before freedom. The benne seed ritual indicates that before Methodist missionaries came, plantation depredations against the master did not warrant censure in the slave quarters. It is doubtful that this changed even after slaves "accepted" white Christianity. Internal association among any group is more significant than outside forces, especially if the outside element is an oppressive one. Also, community leaders did not go about seeking wrongdoers. Instead, cases were reported by other church members or by individuals involved in the grievance. Obviously a case brought to the leader's attention by the planter had to be acted upon. But the Gullahs did not view plantation "discipline" from the master's perspective, or as "just law."

The religious court heard both sides of a dispute and encouraged the parties to reach an agreement without input from the Praise House leader or other church members. Usually cases were settled at the first level. If not, the case went to the leader and then to the membership. The religious court system was respected and taken seriously. The small amount of crimes after slavery indicate that few Gullahs came before it and few wanted to be censored for misconduct. The ultimate aim of the religious court was to maintain "peace and harmony" in the community. The Gullahs believed this was best accomplished by settling disputes within the group. There was strong disapproval of anyone who went to the master or, after slavery, to the secular authorities. Such a person did not want a settlement, but to merely create more trouble for the group.[7]

The same attachment to religion and community membership that existed among West Africans was observed among the Gullahs. At the

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"help" who held Praise House membership, conducted religious services, and oversaw local religious activity was actually more significant than the black elder who might oversee several plantations. Like the elders, spiritual leaders were loved, respected, and faithful in those things pertaining to the welfare of the religious community. The spiritual leaders' influence belonged to a tradition older than the black elders' role.[17] They undoubtedly adjusted to Christianity by making a place for themselves in the heart of it as practiced by Gullahs. Also Baptist elders, though having the interests of the community at heart, may have imbibed too much of the new religion and been too willing to preach and teach conservatism. Thus for the Gullahs, the power of and respect for plantation spiritual parents exceeded that of Baptist-sanctioned elders. The former were healers, interpreters of dreams, signs, and visions, all of which were central to Gullah conceptions of religion and infused with their impressionistic form of Christianity.[18] The functions of the two types of religious leaders may have overlapped to some degree and also complemented each other. They represent different aspects of the Gullahs' spiritual existence—one Christian, the other African—and an element of syncretism within slave religion.

Examination of Gullah methods of admission to church membership is one key to understanding the significance of the spiritual leader's role, Gullah socioreligious spiritualism, and links with a West African past. A candidate's acceptance into the church and subsequently into the Praise House depended upon relating a satisfactory experience, which was the result of a soul-grappling, traumatic confrontation between the individual and a higher power, culminating, if successful, in a sensation of rebirth and full membership in the religious community. The period of transition between the time a desire to become a Christian was expressed and the acceptance by elders of the religious experience was called "seekin'."

The name, "seekin'" was introduced to the Gullahs by Methodist missionaries. At meetings with slaves, after preaching and teaching, the Methodists would then inquire if anyone would like to come forward and "seek Jesus." Those who professed such a desire would then go "on trial" and remain in this limbo status until the missionary deemed them ready for baptism. Probationers, or "seekers of religion," were required by Methodists to know the Creed, Sacraments, and Lord's Prayer, and they were "not eligible for baptism until they had learned them under-

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standingly."[19] It was an impractical expectation, and few of the slaves attempted to provide the missionaries with an "adequate" explanation of religion. Yet true to their adaptive genius, Gullahs embraced the term and devised a unique interpretation of "seeking Jesus" that had little to do with the Methodists' idea, but which the Baptists accepted as proof of "Christian" conversion. A critical and frustrated Methodist missionary provided the *Southern Christian Advocate* with a revealing illustration of the slaves' method of determining religious conversion and their "seekin'" process:

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> When one of these people becomes serious, or "begins to pray" as he would say,—and this is seldom the result of preaching, but most commonly a "warning in a dream,"—it is customary for him to select, by the direction of "the spirit" of course, with some church member of influence, as his spiritual guide. Females are often chosen. Soon after the "vision" in which his teacher is pointed out, he makes known to him his revelation and puts himself under his instruction. These are of a two-fold nature, answering to the two-fold character of the teacher. He is now a prophet to teach him how to conduct himself, and particularly how to pray. He is also "an interpreter of visions" to whom the seeker relates all his "*travel*." This word *travel* . . . is one of the most significant in their language, and comprehends all those exercises, spiritual, visionary and imaginative, which make up an "experience." . . . These travels may differ in some things; and in others they all agree. Each seeker meets with warnings—awful sights or sounds, and always has a vision of a white man who talks with him, warns him, and sometimes makes him carry a burden, and in the end leads him to the river. When the teacher is satisfied with the travel of the seeker, he pronounces "he git thru"; and he is ready for the church. This decision is never questioned by the neophyte. "I prayed under him," says the latter; "he is my spiritual father." Thus the case is settled. The man's religion is endorsed by an authoritative *imprimatur* and heaven is sure. Meanwhile perhaps there has been no solitary conviction of the true nature of sin, no genuine repentance to embitter sin to the soul, no distant apprehension of the sacrifices of the Savior and the merit of his death as the atonement for sin, and the great procuring cause of pardon: in a word, no distant element of Christian experience involved in the whole affair.[20]

The lengthy account failed to mention several other paramount aspects of the "seekin'" experience. First, the seeker was expected, as far as possible, to shun all "social or worldly pleasures." Second, the seeker was required to "go into de wilderness," where the "visions" usually appeared to the candidate and where the travel took place. Solitude and meditation were essential features of the seeking period. Approved and unapproved night vigils were common. Such places as the graveyard,

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adding to a collective attitude in the quarters. Total immersion was exclusively their way of being baptized and, although a Christian service, the pomp, color, and ceremony was original to the slaves. The Gullahs' method of baptism, with its solemn pageantry, had African antecedents as well as Christian form. But more important, from the slaves' point of view, the rite was uniquely a prerequisite for community stature within their own society.

Gullah efforts to construct an organized harmonious social system was further illustrated by the fact that, while collective affiliation in the slave quarters was most significant, a sense of individual fulfillment was also essential. Hence, while "seekin'" culminated in acceptance of socialization through church membership, the experience itself was a private one and the desire to "seek Jesus" was a slave's personal decision, although not devoid of community pressure. The travel, the visions, and the solitude possibly represented a bondsperson's inner reflection and recognition of "self" as opposed to his or her treatment as "thing" by the master. Efforts toward acquiring a valuable self-image is related in the slave's dependence on the spiritual parent who listened to and interpreted individual experiences. The significance of individual experience also had its source in the personal attachment to and identification with Christ, prophets, and disciples rather than to perceived abstractions and inapplicable doctrines within Christianity. Moreover, Gullah cultural achievements represent manifestations of individual creativity as well as collective will and fortitude.

In the Gullah socioreligious community, exclusiveness served collective goals perhaps in the way that secrecy in Poro and Sande expressed loyalty, solidarity, and trust. One illustration of this was the practice of close communion among Gullahs. Close communion was actually an elitist doctrine which the slaves apparently adopted from their Calvinist-oriented Baptist slavemasters. American Missionary Association ministers stated that the Gullahs practiced close communion before they came. "I find that the colored people understand the doctrine of 'close communion' perfectly well," wrote the Reverend Augustine Roots from Port Royal in 1863. "I have however said, myself nothing about the matter-of communion." This was not the opinion of Laura Towne. She related that a white Baptist minister, Mr. Horton, informed the Gullahs that no one "who taught different doctrines" had any right "even to stand in the pulpit." Horton further told the Gullahs that those with differ-at reli-

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gious persuasions "had no right" to come to church communion. Many Northern teachers were Unitarians. Others followed no faith. Still, they enjoyed the Gullah church services and felt that the bondspeople wanted them at communion. In any case a denominational feud erupted in the occupied area. Some Gullahs did not agree with the exclusion practice, and insisted that white antebellum Baptists and Episcopalians even communed together in the Sea Island region, and no doctrinal proscription was made. "So," wrote Towne, "Mr. Horton has not the excuse he gave for his course, that it was already established." After creating the issue Mr. Horton left the region and Mr. Phillips came in his place. Phillips sided with Northern teachers and missionaries. Towne, a Unitarian, stated that the "Reverend Mr. Phillips was here today and says the elders asked by what right we stayed to communion." Phillips interceded on behalf of the teachers, but met firm resistance. "Mr. Phillips . . . says the elders decided to exclude us from communion," related Towne. Later, the teachers continued to press the issue with an influential Gullah leader:

> Nelly had today, I think, a long talk with Demas upon close communion, but he was immovable, as might be supposed. He did not think much of the theological arguments of a girl like Nelly; and he is perfectly unbending by nature."

For a people whose knowledge of Christian doctrine was marginal, and whose spiritual nature was one of warmth and generosity, it was uncharacteristic of the Gullahs to embrace staunchly such a rigid theological doctrine. If close communion was not a concept introduced to the Gullahs by Baptist masters, their use of the concept is even more interesting and further illustrates their adaptive capacity. Yet it was practiced all over the region. Gullahs continued to follow the close communion model, scolding members who worshiped outside of their religious structure. While they frequently invited and always welcomed white Northern missionaries and others to "jine praise wid we," the Gullahs remained adamant about refusing communion to those not of their faith. Perhaps Gullahs interpreted the ritualistic sacrament as a private ceremony among church members and believed that its usefulness in fostering unity and harmony among believers was best served by keeping others out of fellowship. This included white non-Baptists as well as black nonbelievers. The one construst resembling law, custom, practice, and system that Gullahs could consider their own was their religious societies and the beliefs contained therein. Black societies were indeed "invisible

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institutions," and they were controlled from within. While confusion and vacillation occurred in other areas, within Gullah black societies there was organization, structure, and a cameraderie transferable to the slave quarters. Religion was their "fixed point" and the one realm where they needed authority if a group attitude was to be maintained. The concept of close communion was not completely new, given the African heritage. And black elders insisted that only members of the societies had a right to fellowship, for probably no event more symbolized integration of the individual into the socioreligious connection than acceptance of the elements representing the mystical blood and body of Christ. This ritual bound members of the various societies. The more exclusive the event, the more it impressed upon the communicants the responsibilities entailed. By joining society, Praise House, and church, an individual became a full participant in the community. Communion service epitomized this relationship. Communion was not only a method of initiating new converts into the socioreligious connection, but a way of reminding old members of their commitments. In addition to being "de Ark ob Safety" in the spiritual sense, communion was possibly a conduct agreement, restricting antisocial behavior yet inspiring a feeling of personal status very much in the way that Poro and Sande did in West Africa. Gullahs and Africans used their religion to fulfill sacred and secular communal needs in similar ways. In both instances the main emphasis was on community preservation. In each case an institution evolved that initiated individuals into society and committed them to abide by the customs, beliefs, and practices of the group for the sake of unity and order, while not ignoring the members' need to maintain a sense of self.

Once the candidates were baptized and given communion, they were then members of the black society and the plantation Praise House. This new status gave former candidates the right to participate in the ring shout which was held at the praise meeting or in the home of the individual considered to be the most pious. One of the earliest available antebellum description of the ring shout was provided by Charles Lyell, who traveled through the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands in 1848. According to Lyle, on the Hopeton plantation of James Hamilton Couper, over twenty violins were silenced by the Methodist missionaries. Thus was music and dancing, the slaves' chief form of merrymaking, prohibited. Yet Methodists did allow slaves to engage in a form of physical exercise after prayer meetings, hence the origin of the "shout":

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At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move round rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting the right hand and then the left, in which maneuver, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being in fact a kind of spiritual boulanger.[36]

Physical expressions of religious fervor had been a feature of eighteenth-century Methodism. But the phenomenon had for the most part disappeared by the time of the Methodist slave conversion movement. While most Methodist missionaries frowned upon slaves' religious expressions, others heeded the instruction of William Capers, superintendent of missions, to allow the slaves to "be themselves" in matters of worship, so long as they abided by the discipline.[37] Hence, although worldly entertainment was forbidden, in some cases religious exercise was not. Baptist planters may have permitted the shout to exist because they saw no harm in such behavior and recognized the therapeutic effects of such "periodic releases." Thus, the shout ritual, among other things, can be seen as a cathartic which enabled slaves to act out tensions, anxieties, and suppressed facets of themselves in an approved manner. [154]

While Gullahs considered the shout to be a religious, even Christian practice, it was their own creation. At the Praise House, shouts only took place after service had ended and the benediction announced. Also, while Gullahs sang Methodist and Baptist hymns at the praise meetings, when time came for a shout, the slaves sang only their own spirituals.[38] [533]

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Some accounts of the shout indicate that three or four people stood and sang, clapping and gesticulating, while others shuffled along on their heels, following each other in a circle, bending the knees slightly. The movements began slowly, a few going around and others joining in vocally and kinetically, while the song became faster and faster, "till at last only the most marked part of the refrain is sung and the shuffling, stamping and clapping get furious." According to Laura Towne, the floor shook dangerously, swaying rhythmically in time with the song. The dancers would get out of breath only after long periods of time, rest for awhile, and begin again, as the several outside of the ring kept up the singing. Charlotte Forten, a black teacher from the North, added color and imagery to the shout scene she witnessed:

> . . . at the close of the Praise-Meeting, they all shake hands in the most solemn manner. Afterward, as a kind of appendix, they have a grand "shout" during

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Another spiritual expressed a sense of optimism and a superior attitude toward death:

O Massa Death,
He's a very little man,
He goes from door to door;
He kills some souls,
and he woundeth some.
Good Lord remember me;
Good Lord remember me;
Remember me as the years roll round,
Good Lord, remember me.[2]

In Christian belief the finality of death was often negated. One of the most appealing aspects of Christianity for Gullahs was the expectation of a better life after death. This afterlife was not visualized in the African sense, that an individual's status would not differ from one's mortal position. Instead, Gullahs strongly adopted the Christian concept of heaven, where all "true believers" would sit on "Christ's right side." For obvious reasons, this was one of the tenets of Christianity they most cherished.[3] While their African world view encouraged Gullahs to take a rich, positive attitude toward life, through Christian influence they expected a better life as payment for their suffering. As one person expressed it:

> De harder me cross to bear down here de better I go be prepare to tek me place in dat Happy Land where all is 'joicin, an' when I git dere, I want de Lord to say, "Ophelia . . . come an' rest wid de elect ob de Lord!"[4]

There was little in Gullah prayers or songs to indicate they feared the tribunal expected to reward the "faithful" and damn the "sinners." Thus they disregarded that portion of their religious instruction which strenuously emphasized a judgment day where "every theft or falsehood" would be brought to light and held against them. What was more important to the Gullahs was a change in their conditions. Just as Baptist slavemaster Daniel Pope queried Marcus, the Praise House elder, as to whether the Gullahs really believed Christ wanted "black nigger in heben," so were slaves convinced that the "Kingdom of God" would have almost no white subjects. Gullah Christianity was one of recompense. Slaves accepted the Christian doctrine of eternal life but modified it so that heaven was an exclusive place, primarily available to sufferers of the right hue as expressed by a former slave:

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It is impossible to reconcile the mind of the native slave to the idea of living in a state of perfect equality, and boundless affection with white people. Heaven will be no heaven to him, if he is not to be avenged of his enemies. I know, from experience, that these are fundamental rules of his religious creed; because I learned them in the religious meetings of the slaves themselves. A favorite and kind master or mistress may now and then be admitted into heaven, but this rather as a matter of favor, due to the intercession of some slave, than as a matter of strict justice to the whites, who will, by no means be of an equal rank with those who shall be raised from the depths of misery, in this world.
The idea of a revolution in the conditions of the whites and the blacks, is the cornerstone of the religion of the latter; and indeed it seems to me, at least, to be quite natural, if not in strict accordance with the precepts of the Bible.[5]

Although the Gullahs did not fear death, they recognized its power, and the passing of one of their number had a profound effect on the community. As has been noted, Methodist missionaries observed this and often tried to use the drama of death among the Gullahs to "bind them to the cross."[6] But while the Gullahs' perception of life after death was essentially of Christian origin, many practices associated with the dying and the dead were derived from African antecedents.

When death was expected, the plantation community felt compelled to enter into the spirit of the event and vicariously involve themselves in the death throes of the individual, lest when their time came they have to face the ordeal alone, or the deceased, dissatisfied with the send-off, would return and bring evil. The dying person was surrounded by the community, who offered comfort and support. "We got tuh help him cross de ribber," the Gullahs would say. Friends of the dying were expected to bring gifts even though the sufferer could not use them. Such offerings were usually edibles "tuh taste de mou't," but never flowers. Singing, praying, and pious conversation filled the cabin nightly. It was not a solemn time unless sad or obscure circumstances caused the death, but rather was somewhat cheerful, and the subject of death itself was not neglected. Everyone was expected to hold forth as part of the ritual of coaching the dying person to report a heavenly visit or some other evidence of "dying good." When the sufferer drew the last breath, everyone present gave a loud shriek as notification that another soul "done crossed ober." Many Northern teachers were repulsed at the Gullah "death-watch":

This practice of sitting up all night with the dying, H. W. [Harriet Ware] justly enough condemns as "heathenish." "The houses cannot hold them all, of course,

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APPENDIX B

Excerpts from a "Missionary Sketch" Written by Thomas D. Turpin to the Christian Advocate and Journal, January 31, 1834.

. . . the number of adults to whom I had access in preaching were about 1,000, one third of whom were in the Baptist Church and in the negroes societies, and almost all of them under Baptist influence; and that a great many of those lived on an island who scarcely ever saw the pastor of the Church to which they belong. Hence they had societies organized among themselves; and that those societies were very corrupt, and appeared to be very much under the influence of Roman Catholic principles; and that they did penance, and the following was a specimen, viz; that they had three degrees of punishment, and that the punishment was inflicted agreeably to the magnitude of the crime, according to their view of the crime. If the crime was of the first magnitude, the perpetrator had to pick up a quart of benne seed poured on the ground by the priest; and if of the second, a quart of rice; and if of the third, a quart of corn; and that they also had high seats and low seats, but incorrect views relative to those who ought to be punished; and that it was also a rule among them never to divulge the secret of stealing; and if it should be divulged by any one member, that one had to go on the low seat, or pick up the benne seed. I observed, having to contend with all this superstition and

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799 ignorance, together with their prejudices against Methodism, that I had added very few to the Church; and I had, moreover, strived very little to do this, but rather strived to beat down their prejudices and to establish a better principle of religion among them, all of which I should not presume any person in this low country would attempt to contradict.

But it appears to have injured the feelings of many of the Baptist friends. I did not intend to injure their feelings, nor any other persons. Notwithstanding, though it has been said, that I have shot a ball particularly at the Baptists, and in its glance it has hit the Episcopalians. If it has made any mortal wound by its being received in a light different from what I intended I feel it my duty to heal the wound.

797 In regard to the words Baptist influence, it has also been observed,
795 that it has generally been received as intending to mean that the whites have knowledge of those corruptions among the negroes, and tolerate them. I had no such meaning. I simply meant that the negroes were under the peculiar influence of the Baptist tenets. Now, unless the Baptist tenets tolerate the doing of penance (which the world knows to the contrary), it could not mean that they tolerated these things among the negroes. It is notorious that almost all of the negroes in the bounds of my mission are prejudiced in favor of the Baptist Church.

681 As it respects the picking up of the benne seed, it has been said that it was not a very likely thing that it could be done in one night. In answer to this, I heard a gentleman say, no longer than last week, that the rule was, if it was not done in one night, they had to continue until
795 they did it—Again, as regards those of whom I spoke, who scarcely ever saw the pastor of the Church to which they belong, they were a set of negroes belonging to Andrew Marshall's church of Savannah. It may be objected that Andrew Marshall is nothing more than a negro. If he is, that does not derogate at all from the truth of the assertion made in the letter stated above. The negro has been authorized by the Church to preach and baptize.—He has done it, and he has baptized a great many in this low country; and those of whom I spoke are in that number. He is the only pastor that those negroes have on the island. He never comes to see them, nor any other Baptist minister. Therefore the facts remains, there are many negroes on Bull's Island that scarcely ever see the pastor of the Church to which they belong. This is the light in which I in-
[799] tended it should be received . . . the little negroes improve on the mission, but the adults are about the same as represented in the above statement.

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1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; David Thorpe to John Mooney, January 25, 1863, Thorpe Series, James McBride Dabbs Papers, SHC.

18. Charles Sumner to Nina Hartshorn, July 7, 1862, Penn School Papers, vol. 4 SHC. See also Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 218–19; Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), I: 244–45; *SCA*, July 14, 1863 and December 29, 1843; Allen Diary, 18, 127–28, 151–54.

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19. For an extensive bibliography on works about Gullahs and the need for more modern approaches, see Mary A. Twining, "Sources in the Folklore and Folklife of the Sea Islands," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 39 (1975): 135–50; In 1980 the *Journal of Black Studies* devoted an entire issue to Sea Island culture. Twining and Baird, eds., *Journal of Black Studies;* Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, passim; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), passim.

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20. Harriott Pinckney Rutledge to Edward Rutledge, August 5, 1822, Pinckney Papers, SCHS; James Hamilton, *Negro Plot* (Charleston: Joseph W. Ingraham, 1822), 291; Benjamin Elliott, "To Our Northern Brethren," quoted in Edwin C. Holland, *A Refutation of the Calumnies Circulated against the Southern and Western States, Respecting the Institution and Existence of Slavery among Them* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1822), 79; Lionel Kennedy and Thomas Parker, *The Trial Record of Denmark Vesey*, Intro. by John Oliver Killens (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970; repr. from 1822 ed. and published under title: *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes*), 13–14, 76–79; F. A. Mood, *Methodism in Charleston* (Nashville: E. Stevenson and J. E. Evans, 1856), 130–31; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row. 1965), 72–76; Susan Markey Fickling, "Slave Conversion in South Carolina, 1830–1860" (M. A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1924), 16–17; Thomas Bennett to Richard Furman, 1822, Furman Papers, SCL; Henry Irving Tragle, *The Southhampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Materials* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971); Rev. Leroy F. Beaty, *Work of South Carolina Methodism Among the Slaves: An Address Delivered Before the Historical Society of the South Carolina Conference*, November 26, 1901, HSSCC, 9–10; C. C. Pinckney to William Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; Luther Porter Jackson, "Religious Instruction of Negroes, 1830–1860," *Journal of Negro History* 15 (1930): 79–79.

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1. Gullah Roots

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1. James Pope-Hennessy, *Sins of Our Fathers: A Study of the Atlantic Slave Traders, 1441–1807* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 38; Daniel Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 34–36; Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade: Precolonial History, 1450–1850*,

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26. Folklore Project, #1655 and #1855, D-4-27A, 27B, WPA, SCL; Lowrey, *Old Plantation*, 83–87; Towne Diary, 9n; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands of South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Folk-lore Society 1923), 211–13; E. Horace Fitchett, "Superstitions in South Carolina," *The Crisis* 43 (1936): 360–71; Henry F. Davis, "Folk-lore in South Carolina," *Journal of American Folklore* 27 (1914): 245–49; Leonora Herron and Alice M. Bacon, "Conjuring and Conjure Doctors," *Southern Workman* 24 (1895): 118; Louis Pendleton, "Notes on Negro Folklore and Witchcraft in the South," *Journal of American Folklore* 3 (1890): 301–17; Balandier, *Daily Life in Kongo*, 248–50; Laman, *Kongo*, III: 216–21; Glave, "Fetishism in Congo Land," 834–36; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d., circa 1850, 2–4, SHC; Charles A. Raymond, "Religious Life of the Negro Slave," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 27 (June–November, 1963): Part I, 478–80, Part II, 676, Part III, 821; David Thorpe to John Mooney, January 25, 1863, Thorpe Series, James McBride Dabbs Papers, SHC.

27. Despite the exalted modern application of the term "ontology" in its reference to abstract being, "ontology" originally referred to that which belongs to existent finite being. See Walter Brugger, ed., *Philosophical Dictionary*, trans. Kenneth Baker (Spokane: Gonzaga University Press, 1972), 301–2 ("Ontology"). With regard to African culture and spirituality, the concept of being cannot be restricted to the physiological, as opposed to the psychological or fantastic sphere.

28. MacGaffey, *Custom in Lower Kongo*, 261–62; Parsons, *Religion in an African Society*, 173–76, 179, 183–85; Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, Chapters 2–6; Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, trans. Colin King (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), passim; Sibley and Westermann, *Liberia*, 187–88; Abraham, *Mind of Africa*, 52; Harris and Sawyerr, *Mende Belief*, 115–17; Mbiti *African Religions*, 2–16.

29. Michael Welton, "Themes in African Traditional Belief and Ritual," *Practical Anthropology* 18 (1971): 1–8; E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion, A Definition* (London: SMC Press, 1973), 61–68; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; *SCA*, July 28, 1843, February 16, 1844, October 30, 1846; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 592.

30. Mbiti *African Religions*, 210–13; Abraham, *Mind of Africa*, 106; Sibley and Westermann, *Liberia*, 190–91; Parsons, *Religion in an African Society*, 174, 183–84; Harris and Sawyerr, *Mende Belief*, 103–5; Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, 41, 81–89; Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Chapters 5–6; Jahn, *Muntu*, 110, 114–17; Amponsah, *Topics on African Traditional Religion*, 70–80; Opoku, *West African Religion*, 152–60.

31. Mbiti, *African Religions*, 16.

32. Harris and Sawyerr, *Mende Belief*, 117–21; Thompson and Cornet, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 84.

33. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, 64–66; Jahn, *Muntu*, 121–27; Sibley and Westermann, *Liberia*, 187–202; Abraham, *Mind of Africa*, 48–49, 52, 59–62; Parsons, *Religion in an African Society*, 174–93; Harris and Sawyerr, *Mende Belief*, 123–24; Mbiti, *African Religions*, 15–16, Chapters 11–14; Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, 78–83; Thompson and Cornet, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 27–99; Opoku, *West African Religion*, 91–139; Amponsah, *Topics on Traditional Religion*, 48–68.

3. Missionaries and Masters

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2. Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 37–38; Samuel Thomas to Dr. Bray, January 20, 1702, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 1, series A, vol. 1; Francis Varnod to SPG, January 13, 1723, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 6, series B, vol. 4 (1); Thomas Nairne to Dr. Marston, August 20, 1705, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 12, series A, vol. 2.

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3. South Carolina Clergy to Gideon Johnston, March 4, 1712, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 6, series A, vol. 8; William Taylor to SPG, May 15, 1716, SPGLL, BV 7, reel 6, series B, vol. 4 (1); Gilbert Jones to SPG, November 16, 1716, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 13, series B, vol. 4 (1).

4. Francis Le Jau to SPG, March 22, 1708–9, SPGLL, BV 6, reel 3, series A, vol. 4; South Carolina Clergy to Gideon Johnston, March 4, 1712, SPGLL.

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14. Klingberg, *Appraisal of the Negro*, 66–68, 69–70, 72; Wood, *Black Majority*, 314–26.

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19. Samuel Thomas to SPG, December 25, 1702, SPGLL; Thomas Hassell to SPG, August 20, 1712, BV 6, reel 3, series A, vol. 7; Letters of J. Ottolenghe, July 12, 1758, SPG, London Ms. of Dr. Bray's Associates, Letters from the American Colonies, BX 19, reel 10; Klingberg, *Carolina Chronicle*, 118–19.

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21. Wood, *Black Majority*, 314–15, 324–25; For a discussion on the relationship between literacy, rebelliousness and Spanish agitation, see Klingberg, *Appraisal of the Negro*, 69–70; and Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 207–9.

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22. Alexander Garden to SPG, May 6, 1740, Box 20 from Lambeth Palace Library, vol. 941, no. 72, Ms. of Archbishop of Canterbury; Klingberg, *Appraisal of the Negro*, 70–104; Garden attempted to interest the Bray Associates in his plans for a Negro school. He proposed that the two Purrysburgh missionaries alter their arrangement, pointing to the larger, more accessible black population in Charleston and better opportunities for success. The two Moravians presented the proposal to Oglethorpe and the Associates, but to no avail. The Purrysburgh missionaries reluctantly kept their commitment to the Associates. Van Horne, *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery*, 19.

23. Klingberg, *Appraisal of the Negro*, 66–68; Wood, *Black Majority*, 323–24; Robert Maule to SPG, Summer, 1710, SPGLL; Dalcho, *Episcopal Church of South Carolina*, Chapter 4.

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32. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 172–82; "Early Negro Churches," 70–71; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 12–13; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 139. In the Peedee region, the Welsh Neck Church, formed in 1738, was a large congregation whose extensive black membership was organized into a separate church in 1779. This was a short-lived experiment, ending in 1782. At that time, some whites and a "greater number of blacks" were excommunicated by a new minister who discovered that upon examination, the blacks especially "appeared to be very ignorant of the nature of true religion." King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 39–44.

33. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 174–76, 178, 182, 191; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 29–31.

34. Mrs. J. H. Redding, *Life and Times of Jonathan Bryan 1708–1788* (Savannah: Morning News Print, 1901), 43; "Early Negro Churches," 77–79; Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 186–87; John Rippon, ed., *Baptist Annual Register for 1798–1801* (London: Dilly, Button, Thomas, 1802), 366–67; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*. Andrew's church spawned two sister churches in Savannah by the early nineteenth century.

35. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 181–190; "Early Negro Churches," 83–87; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 11.

36. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 10–12, 29–31; Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 4–5; Kathleen Tudor, "David George: Black Loyalist," *Nova Scotia Historical Society* 3, no. 1 (1983): 71–75.

37. Donald Blake Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion in the Deep South," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1973), 9–14; Redding, *Jonathan Bryan*, 44–45.

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38. Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 135–40, 44–45; Matthew Tate to Benjamin Rush, October 1, 1792, Benjamin Rush Correspondence, vol. 7: 6, HSP.

39. Diary of John Bartram, 78–79, John Bartram Papers, HSP.

40. U.S. Census Office, *First Census, 1790* (Philadelphia: Childs and Swaine, 1791), 54; "Diary of Timothy Ford," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 45 (1944): 142–45.

41. Abigail Capers to Eliza Russell, March 25, 1971; James McBride Dabbs Papers, SHC.

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42. John Bartram Diary, July 1, 1765–April 10, 1766, John Bartram Papers, HSP; Johnson, *Social History*, 18–26, 115–118; Armstrong, "Sea Islands History," 30; Euhaw Baptist Church Mss., March 14, 1834, SCL; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL.

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43. Richard Furman to Roger Williams, September 10, 1800, Richard Furman Papers, SCL.

44. Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, February 9 and March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL.

45. Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1842 ed.), 57, 60–61; Reverend Dr. Richard Furman, *Exposition of the Views of the Baptists, Relative to the Coloured Population in the United States, in A Communication to the Governor of South Carolina* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1823), 15; Rules and Regulations of the Coloured Ministers, Elders and Members of Baptist Church in Charleston, SCL; Edmund Botsford to Richard Furman, March 10, October 12, 1796, October 15, 1808, Edmund-Botsford Letters, BC.

46. Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield, Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century Revival*, 2 vols. (Gildford and London: Billing and Sons, 1970), II: 438; Rev. A. M. Chreitzberg, *Early Methodism in the Carolinas* (Nashville: Barbee and Smith, 1897), 32–34; Donald Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism, A Chapter in American Morality 1780–1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 3–6; Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 59–60, 75; Albert Deems Betts, *History of South Carolina Methodism* (Columbia: Advocate Press, 1952), 192; F. A. Mood, *Methodism in Charleston* (Nashville: E. Stevenson and J. E. Evans, 1856), 23–24, 40, 48, 71, 128.

47. *Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 3 vols. (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), I: 381–82; Chreitzberg, *Early Methodism*, 39–43; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 7–9.

48. Phillips, *Appeal to Inhabitants of Charleston*, 22–23; Mood, *Methodism in Charleston* 71, 128; Asbury, *Journals*, II: 28–29.

49. Asbury, *Journals*, II: 241.

50. Norwood, *American Methodism*, 88–93; Albert M. Shipp, *History of Methodism in South Carolina* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), 467–71; "Christmas Agreement," January 2, 1795, HSSCC; James Jenkins, *Experience, Labours and Sufferings of Reverend J. Jenkins of the South Carolina Conference*, printed for the author in 1842, copy found at HSSCC; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 10–21; H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But . . . Racism in Southern Religion, 1780–1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 38–43.

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51. William Hammett Journal, entries for August 26, 1794, January 15, 1795, February 8, 1795, and February 15, 1795, Wm. Hammett Ms., SCL.

52. Ibid., January 15, 1795.

53. Smith, *In His Image, But*, 129–35.

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54. Hammett Journal, entries for January 15, 1795, February 8, 1795, February 15, 1795, SCL; Phillips, *Appeal of Inhabitants of Charleston*, 10–11, 15, 17, 21–22, 29.

55. Chreitzberg, *Early Methodism*, 78, 126; James O. Andrew, "On Methodism in Charleston," *MMQR* 12 (1830): 20–28; A. M. Travis, *Autobiography of the Reverend Joseph M. Travis*, (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F. A. Owens), 1855, 86–87; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 21–26.

56. William M. Wightman, *Life of William Capers, Including an Autobiography* (Nashville: J. B. McFerrin, 1858), 136–37; Andrew, "Methodism in Charleston," 18–20; Shipp, *Methodism in South Carolina*, 167; Betts, *South Carolina Methodism*, 55–57.

57. Betts, *South Carolina Methodism*, 223–24; Carol George, *Segregated Sabbaths, Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 14–18, 29–32; Asbury, *Journals*, III: 22–23, 128.

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cock Jones. But Jones began about ten years after Capers. See Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion," 39–45 and Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 155–57.

11. Andrew, "Slave Population," 314–15.

12. Ibid., 316–19, 322.

13. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 356–61, 365–66, 452–53, 460–62; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 350–62. For a different, more sympathetic view of the Methodists, see Sidney G. Diamond, *The Psychology of the Methodist Revival: An Empirical and Descriptive Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), passim, especially 18–41, 87–103, 254–73.

14. Andrew, "Slave Population," 321.

15. Letter about the life of George W. Moore, missionary to the slaves in South Carolina, written at the time of his death in 1863 (name of writer of the letter is illegible), HSSCC; Leroy F. Beaty, *Work of South Carolina Methodism among the Slaves: An Address Delivered Before the Historical Society of the South Carolina Conference*, November 26, 1901, HSSCC, 9–10; *CAJ*, March 16, 1932. Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 291–92; Pinckney, *Address*, 23, (Appendix); Andrew, "Slave Population," 314; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 66–69. Both Jackson and Fickling take the position that the South Carolina Conference made the first moves toward religious instruction. They probably got this impression from Jones, *Religious Instruction*. In Georgia, two associations were formed by planters for religious instruction in 1830–31. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 155.

16. *CAJ*, April 12, 1833, January 22, 1836; "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, January 9, 1839, 14–18, HSSCC; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 288–91, 295–96; Andrew, "Slave Population," 315–16; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 72–73.

17. Courtlandt Van Rensselaer letter, n.d. (between 1835 and 1836), SHC; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 90–91; Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 93–96; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, *CAJ*, November 20, 1835, January 22, 1836; Jones, *Religious Instruction*, 86; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 295–96.

18. Van Rensselaer letter, SHC.

19. "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, February 10, 1836, 20, HSSCC; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 295–96; *SCA*, January 26, 1838.

20. Pinckney to Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 78–79; *SCA*, January 26, 1838.

21. Jones, *Religious Instruction*, 74–80; Fickling, "Slave Conversion," 16–18; Jackson, "Religious Instruction of Negroes," 86–87. For an excellent treatment on this surge of activity, see Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, Chapter 4.

22. *CAJ*, May 3, 1833, October 22, 1833.

23. Pinckney to Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; Virginia C. Holmgren, *Hilton Head: A Sea Island Chronicle* (Hilton Head, S. C.: Hilton Head Publishing, 1959) 61–67; James Kirk to William E. Baynard, Esq., January 12, 1833, HSSCC.

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24. Holmgren, *Hilton Head*, 130–31; William Pope, Sr. to William E. Baynard, Esq., January 8, 1834. HSSCC.

25. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834: James Sealy to William E. Baynard, Esq., January 8, 1834, HSSCC.

26. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834.

27. George W. Harley, "Notes on the Poro in Liberia," *Papers of the Peabody Museum of*

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American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University 19 (1941): 3, 7; Wilfred D. Hambley, "Initiation of Boys in Angola," *American Anthropologist*, 37, ser. 2, (1935): 36–40.

23. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834.

29. Ibid. and June 20, 1934.

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30. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 189–90. The First African Church's association with white ministers and with the regional Baptist Association was anything but smooth. Because many members were slaves, the African Church was subjected to jurisdictions contrary to Baptist policy. In January 1833, Marshall was barred from preaching in his own pulpit, and the Church expelled from Georgia's Sunbury Association. This struggle and turmoil lasted for five years. The Church managed to keep its status, but lost many members before returning to the good graces of white Baptists. See,Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 189–94.

31. *CAJ*, October 4, 1833.

32. Ibid.

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33. John Coburn to the Missionary Society, January 11, 1835, HSSCC; "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, February 10, 1836, 16, HSSCC.

34. John L. Field to George W. Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC; *CAJ*, January 14, 1834, January 31, 1834, June 26, 1835, July 22, 1836. Field to Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, July 29, 1836; Pierce Butler to James Smith; March 19, 1839, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, box 38 Letterbook 1838–1840, HSP; *SCA*, June 26, November 13, 1840.

35. "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, January 9, 1839, 18 and December 25, 1844, 19, HSSCC.

36. "Pastoral Address," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, December 25, 1844, 14, HSSCC; *Proceedings of the Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, May 13–15, 1845 on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes* (Charleston: B. Jenkins, 1845), 71–72; Norwood, *American Methodism*, 208–9; William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845–1953* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), 35; *SCA*, February 23, 1844; "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, January 13, 1847, 11, and February 10, 1855, 18, HSSCC; *SCA*, May 25, 1855; *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, December 13, 1860, HSSCC; Mason Crum, *Gullah, Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 188.

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37. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), passim, but see especially 3–7, 91–93, 119–20, 135–36, 89–91, 597–98, 658–59; Records of Coffin Point Plantation, St. Helena Island, 1800–1821, SCHS; John Stapleton Papers, St. Helena, 1790–1839, SCL: Diary of John Edwin Fripp, 1857–58 and 1865–68, Beaufort Township Library; Kemble, *Journal*, 42–45, 75; Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee, Portrait of A Cotton Planter, Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, 1812–1890* (New York: William Morrow, 1986) 30, 55; Diary of Laura M. Towne, Penn School Papers, SHC; Guion G. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 74–77, 104, 108–12; Major Pierce Butler to John Cooper, March 7, 1818, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, HSP.

38. Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 134–35; R. King, Jr. "On Management of the Butler Estate and Cultivation of Sugar Cane," *Southern Agriculturalist* (December, 1828): 597; Kemble, *Journal*, 42. For a different version, one which views the power of the driver as representing an enlargement of black autonomy for Lowcountry slaves in general, see Philip D. Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760–1810," in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the*

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Greenwood Press, 1973; repr. of 1940 ed.), xviii–xix. Civil War missionaries reported seeing Africans in the Sea Islands. Towne Diary, 12, reads: "I saw at church from Gabriel Eddings plantation a woman brought from Africa. Her face was tatooed. She seemed of a more vigorous stock"; Harriett Ware, related an account of her meeting a black steward from the *Wabash* in Port Royal. He had just returned from Africa where a slave ship *Ariel* and its slave-pirate were taken. "He gave us a most interesting account of the whole affair, as he went on board with the Captain when he ordered the hatches to be opened and the nine hundred blacks were discovered." Pearson, *Port Royal*, 225.

48. *SCA*, May 1, 1840; Lorenzo D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969; repr. from 1949 ed.), 5, 151; Arthur Sumner to Nina Hartshorn, May 18, 1862, Penn School Papers, v. 4, SHC; David Thorpe to John Mooney, January 25, 1863, Dabbs Papers, Thorpe Series, SHC.

49. Allen Diary, passim and 139.

50. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Federal Writers Program, *Drums and Shadows*, Chapter 6; ield to Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC.

51. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, November 20, 1835, January 22, 1836.

52. *CAJ*, July 22, 1836.

53. Ibid., June 26, 1835; *SCA*, June 26, 1840, June 26, 1843.

54. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–49.

55. *SCA*, June 26, 1840; *CAJ*, July 17, 1835.

56. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972 ed.), 72; Crum, *Gullah*, 189; Kemble, *Journal*, 58; *CAJ*, February 7, 1834, April 25, 1834, September 25, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, May 24, 1839, June 30, 1843, September 29, 1843.

57. William Capers, *A Catechism for the Use of the Methodist Mission* (Charleston: J. S. Burges, 1833), passim; *SCA*, January 31, 1851.

58. Andrew, "Slave Population," 317–18; "Report of the Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, February 10, 1836, 20, HSSCC; *SCA*, January 26, 1838, June 30, 1843; Charles C. Jones, *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), 14; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 295–96. Quoted in John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer, as Revealed in His Letters* (Northhampton, Mass: Smith College, 1925), 14–15.

59. John Bunch to Missionary Society, South Carolina Conference, January 11, 1835, HSSCC; Pinckney to Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; *CAJ*, April 10, 1833, September 9, 1833, January 24, 1835, June 26, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, December 22, 1843, February 23, 1847; Wightman, *Life of Capers*, 298–99.

60. Bunch to Missionary Society, January 11, 1835, HSSCC; *CAJ*, February 7, 1834, June 13, 1834, October 17, 1834, June 26, 1835; *SCA*, April 8, 1842, January 29, 1847, May 6, 1848, March 28, 1851; Crum, *Gullah*, 218.

61. *SCA*, July 7, 1843.

62. Ibid.

63. *SCA*, July 14, 1843, September 15, 1843, September 29, 1843, August 13, 1847, May 18, 1849, September 6, 1850, May 25, 1855.

64. John McKim to Mrs. Wendell Garrison, April 20, 1864. Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. The most well-known individual who argues that Gullah music came from Methodist hymns is Guy B. Johnson, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), ix–xi, 6–8, 74–84; Albert Deems Betts, *History of South Carolina Methodism* (Columbia: Advocate Press, 1952), 159–68. Betts provides a history of the camp meetings in South Carolina and lists

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the known campgrounds by name, location, and dates of their existence. Crum, *Gullah*, 151. According to Crum, W. A. Massebeau in *Camp Meetings in South Carolina* (1919) records the names of 50 campgrounds. Of these, only one, Black Swamp, is south of Charleston. Black Swamp was in the Beaufort District and is close to Savannah. The area experienced its religious revival in the 1830s; Capers, *Catechism*, 14–16; *SCA*, June 30, 1843, July 14, 1843, December 29, 1843, January 12, 1849; John McKim to Mrs. Wendell Garrison, April 20, 1864, W. Athorp to Mrs. Wendell P. Garrison, April 20, 1867 Antislavery Papers; Allen Diary, 18–19, 127–28, 164; Nicholas George Julius Ballanta, *St. Helena Spirituals* (New York: G. Schirmer Press, 1925), Introduction and Foreword; Higginson, *Army Life*, 187–88; Crum, *Gullah*, 132–34.

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65. *SCA*, December 29, 1843.

66. *CAJ*, August 18, 1837.

67. Higginson, *Army Life*, 71–72.

68. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; *SCA*, June 26, 1840; Archie Epps, "A Negro Separatist Movement in the Nineteenth Century," *The Harvard Law Review* 4, no. 1 (Summer–Fall, 1966): 69–80; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–49; Fripp Diary, 60.

69. *CAJ*, September 7, 1833, November 7, 1834; *SCA*, September 15, 1843, September 6, 1850; Thompson, *English Working Class*, 367–68.

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70. "Report of Missionary Society," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, January 13, 1847, 11, HSSCC; *SCA*, June 26, 1840, September 15, 1843, September 29, 1843.

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71. Albert H. Stoddard, "Origin, Dialect, Beliefs and Characteristics of the Negroes of the South Carolina and Georgia Coasts," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 28 (September, 1944): 186–95; Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in Africa* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969), Chapters 2, 3, 5, and especially 7; Views on the "spirit" versus the "letter" of Christian doctrine are based on Friedrich Hegel, *Early Theological Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), Chapter 2, ii, "The Moral Teaching of Jesus, (a) The Sermon on the Mount Contrasted with the Mosaic Law and with Kant's Ethics": iv, "The Religious Teaching of Jesus"; E. J. Hobsbawn, *Primitive Rebels*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1963), Intro., especially Chapters 1–3.

72. "Pastoral Address," *Minutes of South Carolina Conference*, December 25, 1844, 14–15, HSSCC; *SCA*, January 29, 1847; Norwood, *American Methodism*, 208–9; Barnes, *Southern Baptist Convention*, 40–41; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 71–72.

7. *To Make Them Better Slaves: Baptist Persuasion, 1830–1861*

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1. *Proceedings of the Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, May 13–15, 1845 on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes* (Charleston: B. Jenkins, 1845), 49; Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee, Portrait of a Cotton Planter, Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, 1812–1890* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 146–47; *CAJ*, June 20, 1834; Harvey H. Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47, 3rd. ser., no. 4 (October, 1986): 594–95; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152–57; A. H. Newman, *A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States* (New York: Christian Literature, 1894), 4–6, 79; David Benedict, *A General History of The Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby, 1848 repr. from 1813 ed.), 701–3; Joe Madison King, *A History of South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia: General Board, South Carolina Baptist Convention, 1964) 212–14; H. A. Tupper, ed., *Two Centuries of the First Baptist Church in South Carolina, 1663–1833* (Baltimore: R. H. Woolard, 1899), 224–25; Euhaw Baptist Church Mss., March 14, 1834, Lawton Family Papers, SCL; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Ver-

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stille, March 2, 1831, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; *Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association*, 1802, October 17, 1817, November 27, 1830, BC.

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2. James Busch, "The Beaufort Baptist Church," Beaufort County Historical Society Paper, n.d., 13, Beaufort Township Library, Beaufort, South Carolina; *CAJ*, January 6, 1832; William M. Baker, *The Life and Labours of the Reverend Daniel Baker, D. D., Pastor & Evangelist* (Philadelphia: William & Alfred Martien, 1859), 145–56; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1879), 67–68; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 22, 1831, 24, November 26, 1831, 18, 20, November 23, 1833, 10, BC; see Appendix C. Table C.1 lists the churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1833, and indicates the number of baptisms for that year.

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3. *Minutes of the Euhaw Baptist Church, 1831–1875*, December 21, 1831, 11, February 18, 1832, 12, June 23, 1832, 16, August, 1832, 18, SCL; James W. Busch, "Beaufort Church," 15; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 79–82, 104–5; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 147. Some Episcopalian planters participating in the 1831 revival subsequently became liberal contributors to the Methodist cause of religious instruction of the slaves. *Minutes of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, February 10, 1836, 22, January 9, 1839, 18–19, HSSCC; *CAJ*, January 26, 1838. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 20, 1834, BC.

4. Appendix C, see tables C.1 and C.2. The fluctuation noticeable in the membership of mainland churches occurred because new churches drew members away from older congregations. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November, 1834, taken from the pages of the *Southern Baptist and General Intelligencer*, January 3, 1835, BC.

5. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, BC; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 16; Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes of the United States* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1842 ed.), 96–98; Chalmers D. Davidson, *The Last Foray: The South Carolina Plantations in 1860: A Sociogical Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 96–98.

6. Bynum Shaw, *Divided We Stand: The Baptists in American Life* (Durham: Moore Publishing, 1874), 113–14; Newman, *Baptist Church in the United States*, 304–6; Guion G. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 45, 103–4, 117; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 24, 1849, BC. William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845–1953* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), 19; H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But . . . Racism in Southern Religion, 1780–1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 53–55; Reverend Dr. Richard Furman, *Exposition of the Views of the Baptists, Relative to the Colored Population in the United States, in A Communication to the Governor of South Carolina* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1823), 6.

7. Shaw, *Divided We Stand*, 113–16; Barnes, *Southern Baptist Convention*, 20–21; Smith, *In His Image, But*, 117–21, 127–28; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 227; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, September 12, 1840, 9, BC; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, November 25, 1837, 5, October 24, 1840, 3, BC.

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8. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 24, 1838, 6, November 23, 1839, 11, October 23, 1841, 12, November 26, 1842, 4–5.

9. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 153, 227; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 16; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, BC.

10. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1841, BC.

11. Jones, *Religious Instruction*, 210–11; John B. Adger, D. D., *My Life and Times, 1810–1899* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 198–99; *Proceedings*

A, [For Appendix C, see Category 795, pp. 337-339--Analyst]

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of Charleston Meeting, 5–6, 14; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, October 21, 1841, 4, BC.

12. Thomas Bennett to Richard Furman, 1822, Furman Papers, SCL; Charles C. Pinckney, *An Address Delivered in Charleston Before the Agricultural Society of South Carolina, At Its Annual Meeting, 18th August, 1829* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1829), passim; James O. Andrew, "The Southern Slave Population," *MMQR* 13 (1831): 315–17; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 14–15.

13. "South Carolina through New England Eyes, Almira Coffin's Visit to the Low Country in 1851," John H. Tucker to T. D. Grimke, n.d., early in 1845, SCHS; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 71–72; "Pastoral Address," *Minutes of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, December 25, 1844, 14–15, HSSCC; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 6, November 24, 1849, 7–8, BC; *SCA*, January 29, 1847; John B. Adger, *A Sermon Preached by the Rev. J. B. Adger of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S. C.*, May 9, 1847 (Charleston: T. W. Haynes, 1847), 12–13, and *Life and Times*, 164–99; Reverend Alexander Glennie, *Sermons Preached on Plantations to Congregations of Negroes* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1844), passim; Charles Colcock Jones, *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847, 27–33; and *A Catechism of Scripture Doctrine and Practice* (Savannah: T. Purse, 1844), passim; Reverend A. F. Dickson, *Plantation Sermons* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1855), passim; Tupper, *Baptist Church of South Carolina*, 317–18; Donald Blake Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion in the Deep South," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1973), 71–85; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, Chapter 4; Rev. J. H. Thornwell, *The Rights and Duties of Masters. A Sermon Preached at the Dedication of A Church Erected in Charleston, S. C., For the Benefit and Instruction of the Colored Population* (Charleston: Steam-Power Press, 1850), 48–51.

14. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 6–7, November 24, November 26, 1853, 10–11, November 25, 1854, 19, November 23, 1855, 12, November 14, 1857, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1841, 15, November 11, 1843, 66, BC; Benedict, *Fifty Years among the Baptists*, 39.

15. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, passim, BC; see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, August 7, 1853, 179, BC; Fred Jones, "Report on Church History: A Historical Sketch of the Old Black Swamp Church," Lawton Family Papers, SCL.

16. See Chapters 3 and 4.

17. Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 26, 1831, 18–20, BC; *CAJ*, January 6, 1832; Diary of William P. Hill, 1833–39, SHC (Hill was a Universalist from Maine who went South for health reasons and became a Baptist preacher); Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 67–68; W. H. Dowling, "Black Swamp Church," n.d., SCL; Baker, *Life and Labours*, 144–45, 157, 169–73.

18. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 153; Samuel Gaillard Stoney, ed. "The Autobiography of William John Grayson," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 1 (January, 1948): 34–36.

19. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 153; Stoney, "Autobiography of Grayson," 34–36.

20. *CAJ*, January 6, 1832; Stoney, "*Autobiography of Grayson*," 34–37.

21. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 154–55.

22. Racial designations were not yet indicated nor names of slaves included on membership rolls. But the slaves' acceptance into the church was recorded in the Minutes. *Minutes*,

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Beaufort Baptist Church, Membership Rolls, and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2; *Minutes, Euhow Baptist Church*, 11–12, 14, 16, 18–19, 32, 55–56, 58, 66–68, 70; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church."

23. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 79–82; Stoney, "Autobiography of Grayson," 36; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13–17. Within this same article is a section entitled "Richard Fuller and Slavery," 11; and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2.

24. Johnson, *Social History*, 103; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–20, 67–79; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

25. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 81–106; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

26. "Former Slaves Recollect Fuller," in Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 106–113; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864): 589–90.

27. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 26, 1853, 10–11; November 25, 1854, 16; November 14, 1857, 10–11, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, July 12, 1857, 2–3, 35; November 7, 1857, 241–43, BC.

28. This is an estimate and represents population based on the 1830 census returns. U.S. Census Office, *Sixth Census, 1840* (Washington: T. Allen, 1841), 95; see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.3.

29. See Appendix C, table C.2; U.S. Census, *Sixth Census*, 95–96, 226–27; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 22, 1845, 16, BC; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–50; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 273, BC.

30. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 5, November 1859, BC; see Appendix C, table C.3.

31. Baker, *Life of Labourt*, 155–56; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–16, 64–65, 67–75; John Stapleton Papers, SCL, have information on the Rhetts, who bought Frogmore Plantation, St. Helena, from Stapleton in 1836; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; Diary of John Edwin Fripp, Beaufort Township Library; For Princeton preference see "Notes and Documents; Antebellum and War Memories of Mrs. Telfair Hodgson," Sarah Hodgson Torian, ed., *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (December, 1953): 352; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 88–91; Johnson, *Social History*, 103–11; Hill Diary, SHC; Baptist Church at Black Swamp Mss., Lawton Family Papers, SCL; George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols., *South Carolina Narratives*, vols. 2 and 3 in 4 Parts (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing), II (1) 155–58, 161–62; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 201; Johnson, *Social History*, 114–15; Henry Noble Sherwood, ed., Introduction, "Journal of Miss Susan Walker, March 3d to June 6, 1862," *Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 7 (January–March, 1912): 5.

32. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 201–2; Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, Supp. I (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871), 197–202; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 353–56; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 140–43, 203–11; Mason Crum, *Gullah, Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 35–54.

33. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedmen at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 295.

34. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, "God's Schoolmaster: Southern Evangelists to the Slaves, 1830–1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), 16–22; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 140–58.

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57. *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Allen Diary, 37, 71, 87–88; Rev. W. T. Richardson to Rev. Whipple, July 3, 1863, AMA; Sherwood, "Walker Journal," 32–33, 40–41.

58. Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 377; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part II, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 674; Allen Diary, 32, 143; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (1) 158–59, 162, 179–81, III (3) 273–75.

59. Allen Diary, 47–48, 103, 118, 136; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 150–54, 164–65.

60. Allen Diary, 48, 62, 72, 84.

61. Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 456–58.

62. Ibid., 124.

63. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, March 31, 1849, 133, May 5, 1849, 134, June 30, 1849, 135, BC.

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64. Thomas Wentworth Higginson to Louisa Higginson, October 23, 1863, Papers of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Allen Diary, 91–92; Typescript copy of Diary of Laura M. Towne (varies from Ms. Diary), April 3, 1862, Penn School Papers, vol. I, SHC. Theodore Rosengarten perhaps in support of arguments favoring paternalism on the Sea Islands (a point on which we disagree), maintains that black sentiments toward matters "were sometimes not always understood or accurately rendered by the people who solicited information." He cites by example, Laura Towne's reaction to Clarence Fripp's relationship with his slave Rachel. They lived together openly, and during the war, Fripp deeded over his plantation to Rachel. Towne said Fripp "led an infamous life, too bad to write of, to vile to speak of." Rosengarten implies that Towne's disgust toward Fripp centered on his living with Rachel. Yet Laura Towne was not so naive as to condemn Fripp for this alone, However, she was very upset upon learning that Clarence and his two brothers passed Rachel around for sexual favors. "She lived with her master and his two brothers infamously and her children are almost white," wrote Towne. Thus Towne reacted to the wanton license exercised by the Fripps toward slave women. Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 166; Towne Diary Typescript, February 14, 1864, Penn School Papers, vol. 2, SHC.

65. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 162–274; Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 358–61, 450–53; Sherwood, "Walker Journal," 34; Fripp Diary, 60; Allen Diary, 103; Towne Diary, 14, 20.

66. Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 214–20; Towne Diary Typescript, April 3, 1862; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 593.

67. *Minutes, Prince William Baptist Church*, May 20, 1865, 107, SCL.

68. March 14, 1824, in Lawton Family Papers, SCL; Black Swamp Church Mss., SCL; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (1) 158; William Tillinghast, *Address to Baptist Ministers of the U. S. Who Hold Slaves by A Minister of the Ministerial Conference of the Black River Association* (Antwerp:, 1845), New-York Historical Society.

69. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 3–4; November 25, 1849, 9, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, September 12, 1840, 9, April 9, 1841, 15, BC.

70. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1839, 9, BC.

71. Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968; repr. from 1893 ed.), 158–61; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, III (3) 201; Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 381.

72. Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 374–76.

73. Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 155; Laura M, Towne to Wendell Phillips Garrison, June 8, 1867, Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room Cornell University.

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74. Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 594; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 157–58.

75. *CAJ*, August 18, 1837; *SCA*, July 7, 1843, August 21, 1840, February 3, 1841, September 29, 1843.

76. As far as total immersion was concerned, Methodist missionaries were willing to baptize slaves in this manner if the slaves so desired. *CAJ*, February 7, 1834; John L. Field to George W. Moore, March 21, 1833 HSSOC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184–85; III (3) 202.

77. Towne Diary, 26, 54; Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, 26–28; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, November 20, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, May 1, 1840, April 9, 1842, June 26, 1843, July 28, 1843.

78. *SCA*, February 16, 1844, October 30, 1846.

79. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 29–50; Russell, *My Diary*, 77; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d. (around 1850), SHC; *SCA*, March 30, 1849, May 12, 1849, September 6, 1850, July 5, 1855.

80. *SCA*, May 18, 1849; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 145–47; Fripp Diary, 9, 18, 40, 47, Towne Diary, 22.

8. Elements of the Head and the Heart: Gullah Interpretations of Christianity

1. "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC. For discussions on the Union victory at Port Royal see Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 3–12; Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter, Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, 1812–1890* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 202–22.

2. Randall Hunt, "Journal of a Traveller from Charleston, S. C. to New Haven, Conn., 1832," SCHS; "South Carolina through New England Eyes, Elmira Coffin's Visit to the Low Country in 1851," SCHS; William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, ed. Fletcher Pratt (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 154–59, 161–63, 229–30; "All Saints, Waccamaw, the Parish, the Place, the People, 1739–1948," Beaufort Township Library, South Carolina, Society of Colonial Dames of America, 22–24, 30–33, 38–43. Joyner's book is a reconstruction of black life in All Saints Parish.

3. W. T. Richardson to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, June 19, 1863, Lydia Fuller to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, July 5, 1864, AMA; Diary of William F. Allen in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 144; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968; repr. from 1893 ed.), 91–92, 112–14.

4. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedom at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 304; Laura M. Towne to James McKim, February 1, 1862, Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room, Cornell University; Allen Diary, 96, 127–28, 151–52.

5. Mary Ames, *From a New England Woman's Diary in Dixie* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 68; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 74–75.

6. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 43; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 320–21; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 49; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*,

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are now losing—and the resistance of the slaves to "the miasma of the rice fields" enabled them to take care of the crop during the "pestilential season" with the minimum of white supervision. In consequence, all white residents who could leave [25] fled at nightfall to the "salts"—as the sea marshes were called—or to the dry and higher pine land, whichever might be nearer, and the Negroes were left very much to themselves. It requires no stretch of the imagination to assume that the beloved rhythms and dances that had been brought from Africa were kept alive in just this way. For which let me say—God be praised! I have never been able to believe that all virtue was vested in the white man or his music.

Another statement of Lyell's is so accurate that it should be given here. He tells us that "The slaves identify themselves with the master, and their sense of their own importance rises with his success in life." Mrs. Shadman, who knew all the ex-slaves on St. Simon's, told me that Maum Rhina at Cannon's Point was heard to say: "I hol' my head jus' as high as my Missus. I'se a Wylly nig'ah." The Wylly Negroes always felt they were superior to those of the Hazzards, who lived on the adjoining plantation. The feeling of animosity that has persisted for more than a century among the descendants of the slaves of the two plantations may be because of the duel over a boundary dispute, in which young Wylly was killed by his neighbor, Dr. Hazzard.

In spite of the Negroes being passionately fond of music and dancing, the activity of the Baptist and Methodist missionaries was such before 1845 that Lyell tells us: "On the Hopeton Plantation above twenty violins have been silenced." The ban on secular music was the same in the vicinity of Beaufort, South Carolina. The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* reported that they never saw a musical instrument among the Port Royal freedmen, and mentioned that the last violin, owned by a "wordly man," disappeared from Coffin's Point in 1861. They expressed regret that they could not obtain enough secular songs to make a division by themselves, and went on to say: "It is . . . already becoming difficult to obtain these songs. Even the 'spirituals' are going out of use on the plantations, superseded by the new style of religious music, 'closely imitated from the white people.' " The statement made by the editors that "The same songs are used for rowing as for shouting," holds true on the coast of Georgia, and it is interesting to find that the identical tunes were favorites the length of the sea-island chain between the Peedee and the Satilla Rivers. (Map, page xxxii.)

The similarity of the speech, customs, and music of the Gullah Negroes through-

[25] The terms of the overseer's contract required his presence on the plantation except under urgent circumstances.

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ber of tradesmen on a plantation depended upon the size of the slaveholding and the plantation economy of the owner, every planter on St. Helena Island who owned as many as thirty slaves had at least one tradesman, usually a carpenter. Sometimes the planter had a head carpenter and several subordinates. The Trescot house on Barnwell Island near St. Helena, which had just been completed at the outbreak of the Civil War, was built entirely by Trescot's own carpenters, such work as window sashes and panellings being done in Charleston.[14]

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The carpenter did the building and repair work of the plantation, and when work was slack at home he was usually hired out to neighboring plantations or to some reliable person in Beaufort or Charleston. For instance, in August, 1841, Miss Mary B. Elliott, of Beaufort, paid $69.50 "to Mrs. Oswald's York for carpenter work."[15] In 1851 H. M. Stuart, of Beaufort, paid Joe $19 for plastering a room and $1.50 for mending a chimney.[16] Thus, some of the plantation tradesmen exercised as many liberties as free Negroes, and they commanded a position of respect among their fellow slaves. Miss Laura M. Towne, a missionary to St. Helena during the Civil War, found Will, a cabinet-maker on one of the Capers plantations, "very discontented because he was ordered to the field, there being no work at his own trade to do." He was able to read and was "very intelligent and self-respecting."[17] Sir Charles Lyell, who visited James Ham-

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[14] William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, p. 145. Congressman William Elliott took this house down in 1876, hosted it to the town of Beaufort, and erected it just as it had been on Barnwell Island. The house is now owned and occupied by Dr. M. G. Elliott.

[15] Elliott Account Book.

[16] [illegible] Account Book.

[17] *Letters and Diary of Laura M.* [illegible]

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Town, New Jersey, visited Beaufort and the neighboring Sea Islands in 1785 he recorded in his diary, "The planters all fix at a distance from the road with avenues cut through the woods leading up to their houses. The Negro houses are laid out like a camp & sometimes resemble one."[37] The Negro quarters, or "nigger-house yard," or "nigger street," as they were variously called, did, indeed, resemble a camp spread out a quarter of a mile back of the master's or overseer's house. Edward L. Pierce in 1862 described the houses of the field hands on St. Helena Island as being "ranged in a row, sometimes in two rows fronting each other. They are 16 feet by 12, each appropriated to a family, and in some cases divided with a partition. They numbered on the plantations visited 10 to 12, and on the Coffin plantation they are doubled, numbering 23 double houses intended for 46 families."[38] Later he reported that on some of the plantations the cabins were "ill-conditioned being without chimneys,"[39] so that when there was a fire inside, the occupants were engulfed by a great cloud of smoke. In 1862 Miss Laura M. Towne described the quarters on the Eddings Point plantation, the Edgar Fripp plantation, and on one of the Jenkins plantations as "wretched hovels" with wooden chimneys and general squalor.[40] Later in the same year Charles P. Ware, another missionary to St. Helena Island, found the houses on the McTureous plantation "terribly out of repair, with wooden chimneys and mud floors."[41]

[37] Joseph W. Barnwell (ed.), "Diary of Timothy Ford, 1785-1786," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, XIII, 145.
[38] Pierce, "Report," in *Rebellion Records*, sup., I, 304.
[39] MS in Port Royal Correspondence, E. L. Pierce to S. P. Chase, April 1, 1862.
[40] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 57.
[41] *Port Royal Letters*, p. 77.

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voted; it is quite a relief to see anything so patriarchal, after the apparently uncomfortable relations of masters and servants in the Northern States."[2] Sir Charles Lyell, another distinguished English guest in this coastal family, thought the condition of the slaves was "more like that formerly existing between lords and their retainers in the old feudal times of Europe, than to any thing now to be found in America."[3]

Even the slaves themselves admitted that they were generally well-treated. All on St. Helena Island agreed that, while most of them had "good Massa," certain planters were "Massa Debil heself."[4] The Coffin Negroes reproached the northern missionaries who came to the Island after the capture of Port Royal in 1861 with the fact that there was no "confusion" when they belonged to "Ole Massa."[5] Yet other Negroes were careful to show the missionaries their scars from the lash, and one woman solemnly reported that four babies had been "killed within her by whipping."[6] Miss Laura M. Towne found in one dining room "a whipping-post and pulley for stretching and whipping,"[7] which was probably a fly brush with which some facetious person had tried Miss Towne's credulity.

There was far less cruelty practised on the sea-island slaves than northern sympathizers were inclined to be-

[2] Murray, *Letters From the United States, Cuba and Canada*, p. 220.
[3] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 261.
[4] MS in Arthur Sumner Papers, Port Royal, May 18, 1862.
[5] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 165.
[6] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 58. For other instances of cruelty practised by St. Helena planters see Sarah M. Grimké, *American Slavery As It Is*. It must be remembered that this book was published to prove a case against slavery and that many of the accusations are obviously absurd.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

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567 reluctantly. To check upon the comings and goings of the people it was customary to have "list" twice a day on Sunday when the names of all the men were called, from which none was excused except those who were sick or who had tickets. At the evening list "every negro must be clean and well washed."[46]

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While it is undoubtedly true that some planters in the early days of the introduction of slave labor into South Carolina were hesitant about allowing their Negroes to become christianized for fear that it might elevate them above their chattel state,[47] by the opening of the antebellum period masters quite generally came to look upon the conversion of the Negroes as one of the justifications of slavery. They not only encouraged the various religious denominations to send missionaries to their slaves, but they often built plantation churches for the special use of the Negroes and permitted their sons and daughters to instruct the slaves from the Bible. Missionaries, appointed by the church but chiefly paid by the planters, preached to the Negroes and catechized them. Ministers prepared special sermons and catechisms for them. Bishop Meade of the Episcopal denomination published his *Sermons, Dialogues and Narratives for servants, to be read to them in families* in Richmond in 1836, and the second edition of Rev. Charles C. Jones' *The Catechism for*

[46] Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

[47] *The South-Carolina Gazette*, March 27, 1742.

"WE [the Grand Jury at Charles Town] present, . . . that, by influence of . . . HUGH BRYAN, Great Bodies of Negroes have Assembled together on Pretence of religious Worship, Contrary to Law, and destructive to the Peace and Safety of the Inhabitants of this Province."

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Colored Persons was published in Savannah in 1837. These are only two of many such works published in the South. 567 796

The Missionary Society of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist denomination collected for their missions to the Negroes between twelve and fifteen hundred dollars in 1837 and in 1840 reported nineteen missionaries, thirteen missions, 232 plantations administered unto, 5,482 members, and 3,811 children.[48] Very little data can be obtained concerning the activities of the Baptist denomination among the sea-island Negroes, although it is known that more of them adhered to the Baptist faith than to any other. In the summer of 1838 a revival of religion commenced among the Negroes of Liberty County, Georgia, and spread throughout the entire coastal region of South Carolina and Georgia, continuing for two years. During that time the Congregational Church in Liberty County and the Baptist churches throughout the region greatly added to their colored membership.[49]

In addition to the space reserved for slaves in the rear and in the gallery of "Brick Church" on St. Helena Island, practically every plantation had its own "praise house" where the people held their weekly services. In case the planter provided no separate building, services were held in the cabin of the religious leader. Miss Towne wrote to a friend shortly after she reached St. Helena Island in 1862 that the praise house was "always the cabin of the oldest person in the village of negro houses."[50] She was 567 796 346 567 346

[48] Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States*, pp. 82, 83.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[50] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 20.

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early days of the Civil War, "all stand up in the middle of the floor, and when the 'sperichil' is struck up, begin first walking and by-and-by shuffling around, one after the other, in a ring. The foot is hardly taken from the floor, and the progression is mainly due to a jerking, hitching motion, which agitates the entire shouter, and soon brings out streams of perspiration. Sometimes they dance silently, sometimes as they shuffle they sing the chorus of the spiritual, and sometimes the song itself is also sung by the dancers. But more frequently a band, composed of some of the best singers and tired shouters, stand [*sic*] at the side of the room to 'base' the others, singing the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on their knees. Song and dance are alike extremely energetic, and often, when the shout lasts into the middle of the night, the monotonous thud, thud of the feet prevents sleep within half a mile of the praise-house."[58]

Miss Towne thought the shout to be "certainly the remains of some old idol worship." "I never saw anything so savage," she said. "They call it a religious ceremony, but it seems more like a regular frolic to me."[59] The shout was, indeed, a modification of the Negro's regular dance. After a Negro was converted he no longer attended dances in the cabins where "de sinners cross um feet," for the Methodist and Baptist preachers and missionaries taught the slaves that dancing was evil. He went instead to the praise house where the same dance, recently in vogue today as the "Charleston," was performed, with-

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 27n; also in *Nation*, May 30, 1867. For other descriptions of shouts on St. Helena Island see *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, pp. 20, 21, 22, 23.

[59] *Letters and Diary*, p. 20.

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out crossing the feet, to the tune of a spiritual. Nor did the Negroes take their violins into the praise houses, for the missionaries also taught them that fiddle music was sinful since the fiddle furnished the tunes for the old dances. The last violin on St. Helena Island before the Civil War is said to have been owned by a Negro on Coffin's Point, but he got rid of it before "big gun shoot," as the Negroes called the battle of Port Royal.

Sir Charles Lyell observed the same kind of religious worship on the Georgia Sea Islands and mainland. "On the Hopeton plantation above twenty violins have been silenced by the Methodist missionaries," he wrote in 1845. "At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting first the right hand and then the left, in which manœuvre, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being, in fact, a kind of spiritual *boulanger* [?], while the singing of psalms, in and out of chapel, compensates in no small degree for the songs they have been required to renounce."[80]

The religious life of the slaves was organized by the whites upon the same plan as their own. On plantations of any size, slaves who had joined the church were formed into a class, at the head of which was one of their own number, acting as deacon or leader, who was also sometimes a licensed preacher.[81] The leader who was the head of the praise house often decided in council with his subordinates, the watchmen, whether a candidate for member-

[80] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 269, 270.

[81] "Negro Slavery at the South," DeBow, *Industrial Resources of the United States*, II, 251.

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the fears of the plantation people, making them "satisfy" with the new order. Miss Towne soon found the women appearing at her back door, shyly offering baskets of eggs in appreciation for the services she had rendered them.

Most of the Negroes Miss Towne thought to be "decidedly unhealthy" with bad teeth and general debility.[43] Their bedding and sleeping apartments were "unsuitable," and they often slept on the floor at night without a change of clothing. They did not take proper care of themselves after exposure to the weather and made little effort to prevent disease. Their medical knowledge was a combination of folk-wisdom, superstition, and facts gleaned from ante-bellum days. They insisted on bathing a patient when the tide was going out so that it might take the fever with it. In 1864 Miss Towne complained, "They keep their rooms so dark I cannot see the patients, and if I order a window opened, I find it nailed up the next time I come. The people are beginning to follow a practice which I dislike. They *will* wash the patients with strong pokeroot, and vinegar and salt."[44]

To the superintendents the family life of the people was one of the most distressing phases of the Negro community. Among the first orders which Pierce issued was one requiring that all marriages among the people be regularly performed by a minister according to law, and he strictly forbade a couple's living together until the ceremony had been pronounced. Charles Ware, assistant superintendent on Coffin's Point plantation, had to deal with several cases arising under this order. In 1862 he wrote to a friend at the North:

[43] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 22. [44] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

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I learned that old Nat's boy, Antony, who wanted to marry Phillis, had given her up and taken Mary Ann, July's daughter, without saying a word to me or any other white man. I called him up to me one afternoon when I was there and told him he must go to church and be married by the minister according to law. He flatly refused, with a good deal of impertinence, using some profane language learned at camp. I thereupon told him he must go home with me, showing him I had a pistol, which I put in my outside pocket. He came along, swearing all the way and muttering his determination not to comply. I gave him lodging in the dark hole under the stairs, with nothing to eat. Next morning old Nat came and expostulated with him, joined by old Ben and Uncle Sam, all of whom pitched into him and told him he was very foolish and ought to be proud of such a chance. He finally gave up and promised to go. So I let him off with an apology. Next Sunday he appeared and was married before a whole church full of people.[48]

But the missionaries found to their sorrow that the Negroes did not always have the proper respect for "a marriage according to law." Limus, a driver, had a wife and grown children on his own plantation and another wife on a plantation nearby. Nevertheless, the missionaries tried to settle such cases with a due regard for the parties concerned and attempted to build up among the people a feeling of family loyalty and pride. They urged the Negroes to buy a table whenever possible and to have regular times for the family meal when all should assemble for the occasion.

Pierce at once opened the two white churches on St. Helena Island which had been closed since "gun shoot." Among the superintendents there were several divinity students and ministers who preached to the Negroes on

[48] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 95.

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Sundays and helped conduct their praise meetings and funerals, but the Negroes were jealous of their praise meetings and did not want any of the whites to attend communion except those who were Baptists. The superintendents organized Sabbath schools so that those who did not attend the regular schools might have an opportunity of learning to read the Bible. It was not uncommon for as many as three hundred to gather at Brick Church on Sunday mornings for instruction.

The "contrabands" took readily to the schools which Pierce established. He attempted to place one teacher on every plantation who should conduct classes several hours a day in the praise house, but there was a great scarcity of teachers, so that on some plantations the people received only such instruction as the superintendents had time to give. Nevertheless, the schools were perhaps the best agents for obtaining the good will of the people. The books and slates which the benevolent societies supplied seemed a proof to them of the Yankees' interest in their welfare. By June, 1863, there were twelve schools in the department attended by 2,500 persons, some of whom were adults who received instruction after their work was done. By the next year there were thirty schools conducted by forty or forty-five teachers, with an average attendance of 2,000 pupils.[48]

The thought of the black folk within the Federal lines at Port Royal eagerly grasping for the crumbs of knowledge so long denied them inspired Whittier to write the following song for the schools of St. Helena Island:

[48] Pierce, *Addresses and Papers*, pp. 107, 108.

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"The very oaks are greener clad,
The waters brighter smile;
Oh, never shone a day so glad
On sweet Saint Helen's Isle!

"For none in all the world before
Were ever glad as we,
We're free on Carolina's shore,
We're all at home and free!"[47]

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Among the first group of teachers to reach Port Royal was Miss Laura M. Towne of Philadelphia. Instead of beginning at once to teach, she acted as secretary to Pierce and greatly assisted him in his work. She was soon joined by her friend, Miss Ellen Murray, who at once began a school at The Oaks, where she and Miss Towne were stationed. Later in the year Miss Towne assisted her in the work. In August, 1862, she wrote, "We snatch a lunch and begin school. I have the middle class, Ellen the oldest and youngest. At four, school is out for the children. Ellen then takes the adults while I go doctoring down to the 'nigger houses.'"[48] Later Miss Towne obtained permission to hold her school in Brick Church and still later the Philadelphia Society, by whom she was employed, sent her a schoolhouse ready to be erected. This was the genesis of the school which Miss Towne and her associates in Pennsylvania came finally to call Penn School. Year after year she and Miss Murray labored against great odds to maintain the school, teaching without salary when the funds of the benevolent societies ran low, meeting many of the expenses with personal funds.

[47] *Atlantic Monthly*, XII (September, 1863), 304.
[48] *Letters and Diary*, p. 87.